SOUL MUSIC

THE SOUND!

THE STARS!

THE STORY!

SOUL MUSIC! BY ROCHELLE LARKIN

SOUL MUSIC!

ROCHELLE LARKIN

Little of beauty has America given the world save the rude grandeur God himself stamped on her bosom; the human spirit in this new world has expressed itself in vigor and ingenuity rather than in beauty. And so by fateful chance the Negro folk-song—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas. It has been neglected, it has been, and is, half despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but not withstanding, it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people.

W.E.B. Du Bois
The Souls of Black Folk

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SOUL MUSIC!

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DEDICATION: TO TIPPY
He restoreth my soul

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Aretha Franklin

Introduction

ARETHA FRANKLIN. FOUR TOPS. JAMES BROWN. WILSON PICKETT. DIANA ROSS. IMPRESSIONS.

The names on this page are known all over the world. Their records sell millions of copies. Their names shine in lights in front of the best nightclubs and theaters and concert halls.

JACKIE WILSON. TEMPTATIONS. DIONNE WARWICK. MIRACLES. JERRY BUTLER. FIFTH DIMENSION. ELLA FITZGERALD.

They are idolized by fans and imitated by other performers. Their sounds and their styles are as different as their names and faces.

MARVIN GAYE. SAM AND DAVE. CARLA THOMAS. STEVIE WONDER. LOU RAWLS. ERMA FRANKLIN.

Yet they share one great bond. They are the soul singers, and they, and others like them, have changed the face and the sound and the soul of popular music forever.

B.B. KING. IKE AND TINA TURNER. GLADYS KNIGHT AND THE PIPS. SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE. ISAAC HAYES. O.C. SMITH.

The word "soul" has been given many definitions. To some, it means

being able to endure pain. To others, it means being black. Given the conditions of black people in America, perhaps these two definitions are the same thing. But out of those conditions has come a heritage that has produced a body of music (and music makers) that in its influence and artistry is unsurpassed in the annals of popular culture.

To many listeners, soul music is a fairly new phenomenon, a sound they have been hearing only since the late fifties. But the audiences that have been listening to it and dancing to it all of their lives know that soul was old before any of us were born. The real "birth of the blues" wasn't in the 1920's when some crooner limned that silly lyric into a primitive radio microphone; the blues were born in the agonizing wails that rose from the stifling holds of the slave ships. They took firm root in the fertile cottonfields, cornfields, rice, tobacco, and indigo plantations; they grew with the timber and the "taters"; they rang out with the anvils of the blacksmith and the wainwright and the ironmonger; wherever white America decided black America should work. The music was work song and protest song at the same time. It was the only form of communication permitted the laboring slaves.

The first songs we know of were these field shouts or "hollers." Forbidden to talk during their labors, one slave would sing out to the others. Perhaps it was a complaint against the hardness of the work, or the harshness of the life; such things could never be said within earshot of the overseer. The "lyric" might have been a bit of gossip being passed along but even that could not be spoken between working slaves. So it was sung out, and one or more of the slaves would sing back a response; thus was born the pattern that is still the classic form of soul songs.

This same form, of leader and chorus, of comment and response, followed the converted slaves into church. Here, the preacher was the lead singer, with the congregation serving as chorus: (Because virtually all of the great soul singers come from church backgrounds, we shall discuss the enormous influence of church and gospel music in another chapter.)

The first thing on the mind of any slave was freedom; the last thing on the master's mind was to let him have any. The slave was taught that to escape meant death; soon he came to look upon death as the only escape. The corollary then was that only after death came freedom, i.e., heaven. To sing of freedom was of course forbidden, but to sing of heaven was something else again. That fit in very neatly with the slaveholder's own wishes. His preachers told him that he was doing the Lord's work in converting the heathen slaves to Christianity, and the delighted master could, in all good faith, look on that wickedness as a holy benevolence. So he urged his slaves to seek the kingdom of God as best they could. The "better" masters even took an interest in fostering the religiosity of his slaves. They sang songs about the "darkies" singing *their* songs.

Ray Charles

The masters of Mississippi didn't realize that heaven was as near (or as far) as the Canadian border. Sing, you sinners.

With emancipation came another form of slavery; out of that still continuing experience came another aspect of the music, the secular. Black voices were no longer confined to church, and lyrics began to deal with personal emotions. The great majority of black people still lived in the rural south, and that was where the blues began to develop into the form we know today. For the first time, black people needed money in order to live. Work, paying work, was extremely scarce in the war-impoverished south; it was in this milieu of ravage and poverty that the ex-slaves had to learn, and earn, their new way of life. In addition, the end of slavery and breaking-up of many of the old plantations meant that blacks were no longer confined to living in one specified place. Men could now move around the country in order to find work. In fact, such migration within and without the southern states was mandatory for great masses of men if they were to find work. With them went the blues.

This desperate search, born of poverty, served to enrich the music itself, if not the men who created it. The blues had taken on different characteristics in different regions, and the migrations caused an enormous cross-pollination among the various styles. Different versions of the same verses could tell a particularly aware listener just where the singer came from, or had most recently been.

The majority of the early blues singers were men, and they sang to amuse (and console) themselves and small, largely non-paying audiences of their fellows. It was not until the blues singer began to be accepted as a real performer, and the women singers, the "queens of the blues" appeared, that the world at large became aware of this vital "new" music.

One of the greatest of all blues singers was Ma Rainey, aptly called the "Mother of the Blues." A veteran of countless minstrel and vaudeville appearances, her genius brought to the blues a professionalism it had never previously achieved. Perhaps her greatest achievement was her pupil, Bessie Smith. If Ma Rainey was mother of the blues, Bessie was the *empress*, and so she was titled. Considered the best of the classic blues singers, her career coincided with the rise and development of the phonograph record. Because she could be heard by millions of people, including other singers, Bessie's influence and fame were enormous. A whole generation of great women blues artists emerged behind the fabulous Bessie. The names and voices are immortalized and preserved on records. Victoria Spivey, Ida Cox, Clara Smith, Trixie Smith, Chippie Hill, Sippie Wallace, Mamie Smith (the first recorded black artist), are among the best. Their voices dominated most of the twenties, and it wasn't until the end of that decade that the record companies turned in any great measure from this, the "classic" blues, back to the earlier,

Ella Fitzgerald

less polished, country blues, where the male voice predominated.

In their headlong rush to cash in on the apparently insatiable appetite for blues, the record companies sent their men into those always musically fertile fields of the south. What they brought back was "gold," even if it didn't always, or even usually, mean gold for the bluesman. It was during this time that voices that in an earlier time would have only been heard in their own immediate area became nationally known. The roster of their names evokes the very music: Mississippi John Hurt, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Skip James, Peg Leg Howell, Little Willie John, Mance Lipscomb, Robert, Pete and Lonnie Johnson, Bukka White, Sun House, Furry Lewis, Gus Cannon (whose "rediscovered" "Walk Right In" was one of 1963's biggest hits), Roosevelt Sykes, Big Joe Williams, Georgia Tom Dorsey, (now the Reverend Thomas Dorsey of Chicago, as influencial in gospel as he once was in blues), Joe Turner, Jimmy Rushing, Jimmy Witherspoon, Wynonie Harris, Howlin' Wolf, Dirty Red. Their voices took us from the high times of the twenties, when things were better for most Americans, including the blacks, to the bitter depression years of the 1930's.

At the same time that the classic blues were at the height of popularity and country blues were starting to gain recognition, what is perhaps the greatest fruition of blues music, jazz, had taken center stage. The whole country rocked, swung, and Charlestoned to a hitherto unheard of sound. The evolution of jazz, from march music to dance rhythm, to art form is too long and rich to be chronicled here. However, mention must be made of those early musicians of jazz who were to wield such influence on all pop music to come, and who were such a source of inspiration for so much of what is so good in soul music. Men like Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Art Tatum, Coleman Hawkins, Chick Webb, Fletcher Henderson, Mead Lux Lewis (whose "wah wah" sound was to be re-echoed forty years later by Sly and The Family Stone), Eubie Blake (still semi-active at age 87) and his partner Noble Sissle, Don Redman, Count Basie, and countless others, as musicians, leaders, composers, and arrangers, set standards of excellence unequaled in any other form of popular music, perhaps even in any other popular art form.

During those lean Depression years, on the familiar ground of poverty and deprivation, the blues continued to flourish aesthetically, if not economically. The strongest voice heard in the land was the legendary Leadbelly, whose blues opened the ears of millions of urbanized listeners. Born Huddie Ledbetter, a giant of a man physically as well as vocally, he influenced entire generations of singers in folk, pop ("Good Night, Irene"), and rock (Janis Joplin taught herself to sing from his records), as well in his own genre. Like Big Bill Broonzy, another strong voice of the same period, he died of an incurable disease while still at the height of his career.

Duke Ellington

The war years and immediate post-war era reverberated to these and newer blues voices; three exceptional artists who are still active today came to the fore then. John Lee Hooker, B. B. King, and Muddy Waters command larger audiences than ever among the young. The kids of the rock generation care deeply about their music and its source, therefore they have enormous interest in, and respect for the pioneer bluesmen, whose appearances still fill the rock palaces and small clubs and campus concerts to capacity. Because theirs is a current and continuous influence, we will spend more time with them later.

After fifteen years of depression and war, the country needed a new sound to help it adjust to another great change in our national life. (Somewhere along the line, the recorded music of black artists no longer came to be cataloged with the "race record" designation.) Somehow, it was the black music-maker who sounded the new note. More lighthearted, swingier than the classic or country blues, still obviously coming from the blues form, came the new music – Rhythm and Blues (R & B). The songs were "Caldonia," "Beula's Boogie," "Open the Door, Richard," "For Sentimental Reasons," and a million others. The artists were Louis Jordan, Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, Lionel Hampton, the Ink Spots, the Mills Brothers, and the incomparable Nat King Cole.

In 1903 W.E.B. Du Bois had written, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." As the century stood at the halfway mark, the problem was to worsen, while, ironically, the music was to become even blacker. Taking another phrase from Du Bois, we would soon be calling it "soul."

Wilson Pickett

STAR
TIME
James Brown

James Brown—Soul Brother Number One

James Brown is the realest thing in the whole world. Nobody could have made him up, not even Horatio Alger the rags-to-riches writer. All the paupers who became financial princes in those old stories were little white boys, and Alger could never have imagined a black child growing up into the style of Soul Brother Number One.

James Brown is so real because he stays real. He has never turned away from his roots, his beginnings, and the audience that first responded to him. He earns four million dollars a year, and yet, only appears in ghetto locations, or places where ghetto people can easily get to. He has never altered his style to suit any other audience, and if the middle class, black or white, wants to see him, they must go to where he's at. Not many performers have been able to stay unswayed by the

temptations of mainstream acceptance and mainstream money, but James Brown has proven it can be done, and done very profitably at that. Neither has any other performer (with the exception of Dick Gregory, on a smaller scale) put so much of his earnings right back into the community. James Brown is "down," he is "together," he is "people." So say the audience whose loyalty to him is one of the strongest any performer has ever garnered. J.B., everyone knows, is for real.

* * * * *

"Here he comes! Here he comes! Here he comes!" The other acts have done their thing, and the audience is very ready. The big band, as many as twenty-one pieces (four drummers!) fill the back of the stage, which is in almost total darkness. The excitement is mounting, and with every flicker of light, the screams of "He's coming!" start anew. Finally, the announcer is heard over the p.a. system. "Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. James Brown!" The applause is deafening, but there's no sound in the world that can compete, volume-wise, with Soul Brother Number One. He sings one after another of his big hits—"It's a Man's World," "Please, Please, Please," (his first record to hit), "Lickin' Stick," "Popcorn," "I Got You," "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," and always, "Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud." Now the giant auditorium has become a church, and the Rev. J. B. is calling "Say It Loud!" and his congregation is responding, "I'm Black and I'm Proud!" This magic of give-and-take, call-and-response is so powerful, it melts the footlights and any other physical barriers between the singer and the audience, and they become one. The performance has locked them into a oneness that has to be experienced to be believed; no lesser performer could ever hope to achieve it. It is the ultimate expression of public love.

James Brown has literally thrown himself as well as his audience into a frenzy. He has sung, shouted, groaned, and screamed. He has sobbed and wept and screeched for joy. He has been down on his knees and up in the air, almost giving in to a not completely pretended collapse, only to be brought to his feet again by an onrushing trio of his back-up group. As he gets up, wrapped in the silken, sequinned robe the trio has draped around his shoulders, the audience gets up too, wrapped (and rapt) in the sheer force of his incredible performance. He is practically carried off-stage, only to return on the crest of the onrushing applause, which seems to have revitalized his body sufficiently to permit an encore. This dramatic reappearance, even though much of the audience is hip to it and expects it, is still enough to provoke mass hysteria in the faithful; their loving demands have brought him back onstage; they willed it, and it worked. There will be more songs, more screams, more collapses, more recoveries. When it is finally done, a thoroughly ex-

James Brown

hausted, totally satisfied audience will work its way home to the everyday, and a thoroughly exhausted, hopefully satisfied, seven-pounds lighter James Brown will try to get a few hours' sleep.

* * * * *

Like all legends of a technological age such as this Aquarian one, the J.B. story is crammed with statistics. So many hundreds of suits, dozens of shirts, thousands of cufflinks, tons of luggage, decibels of sound, miles of road, hours of flight. The most interesting and most significant factor, however, is one that is unlikely to appear on the balance sheets of any other star: the human element. It is because of this quality that James Brown is truly entitled to be called Soul Brother Number One. Any good black performer could play that part on stage. However, it is what the man himself does that puts him in a realm far above any other entertainer. He gives back the money, a good-sized chunk of it, where it will do the most good. Dig the following.

J.B. supports fifty otherwise completely impoverished Harlem families. This enables all the kids in those families to finish school (one of his main hopes for all black youth).

J.B.E. (James Brown Enterprises, the corporate structure that houses all his business interests) provides jobs for hundreds (someday thousands) of ghetto residents all over the country. Those businesses are located in, and serve black communities, and in addition to providing salaries and opportunity, plow profits back into these communities and create incentive for black-owned businesses.

With these, and related activities, James Brown is putting at least a quarter of a million dollars back into black communities every year. Harder to put a price on is the good that his personal example does. A kid is more responsive to the message "Stay in School" printed on a James Brown button (printed and distributed free by J. B.) than he would be to a hundred speeches on the subject delivered by anybody else. It is impossible to measure the success of his whole "Stay in School" campaign, but it must be admitted that James Brown can get to kids that nobody else can reach.

In December of 1969, J.B. played the Apollo Theater in New York. The entire proceeds from this gig (estimated at $25,000) were donated to provide holiday meals for the poor.

J.B. gives on many levels.

Anyone can throw cufflinks to their audience, but very few can throw their weight around with the same authority as James Brown. He has become so important and influential in the country that there was serious discussion of the possibility of his going into politics. National publications headlined the question and cited the increasingly social con-

James Brown

tent of his lyrics as a clue. His stature as a spokesman for, and to, the community was made much of. After all, it was James Brown who got on television in the spring of 1968 and pleaded with the kids to stop the looting and burning and get off the streets in Washington, Boston, and a number of other cities. That an entertainer could take such a step, and what's even more significant, be listened to, was quite an eye opener to the dominant white establishment, which, if its entertainers decide to become political expects them to go to places like the United States Senate where they are seldom, if ever, heard from again. For a singer to literally take to the streets, getting down where the people are, was astonishing. The black boy was invited to the White House. Since Lyndon left and Hubert bumbled, we can never know just how close to nitty-gritty they got with J.B., or how much he told them about what life is really all about.

Asking whether it was this politically oriented attention that made white audiences really aware of James Brown or his growing white audience that precipitated the political once-over is a chicken-or-the-egg kind of question. It doesn't really matter anyway since Brown has announced that he is not considering a political career. What is probably the most significant part of the whole affair is that the white power structure may have learned that it cannot manufacture "leaders" for black people. The true leaders will come, as they must, from the people. If James Brown taught them this truth, then he did a valuable thing.

Of course, we should regard the phrase "being political" not in its narrow sense of party politics, but in the much broader meaning of any social activity. In this light, Soul Brother Number One continues to implement his activities and programs to meet the continuous needs of the people.

James Brown the activist evolved from the businessman, Brown the businessman from the showman, the showman from the man himself, the man from the boy, the boy from his roots. Let's go down home to Toccoa, Georgia (since immortalized in Toccoa Industries, a subsidiary company of James Brown Enterprises). Toccoa is north of Augusta, near the South Carolina border; that's mean country, especially if you're poor and black. Rent for the Browns was $7 a month, which wouldn't keep J.B. in dental floss today. Work for his father was washing and greasing cars; work for young James was anything he could get. The easiest way to some coin was singing and dancing outside the gate of a nearby army camp. There was coke to be picked up along the railroad right-of-way for heating; there was cotton to be chopped for a few cents a day. School was something that a black boy wasn't acquainted with for long. Trouble could be found without hardly looking for it. And with trouble came a three-year jail stretch.

Jail is a death-oven for the souls of most men; for the inherently

James Brown

strong though, it can be a crucible and not a crucifix. So it was for Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, and James Brown. They each left their prisons self-educated men, determined never to return, resolute in their ideas of what they were going to do with their lives. I have to think that Malcolm would have dug J.B. What is beyond dispute is the fact that James Brown dug himself, in at least two senses of that multi-meaning word. First, he got to know, to understand himself. He thought of all the possibilities that the world held for him, and decided the best way for him to go. He assessed his talents, his skills, his abilities. People had paid him for entertaining them in the most casual way; now he decided that that was the ability he would capitalize on. (If he wasn't exactly thinking of words like "capitalize" at that moment, well, it wasn't much later that he was!) Then, he dug himself, in the sense of liking himself well enough to believe that he could succeed. That belief has never left him, with good reason. He applied for parole, and when he got it, the James Brown who walked out of prison was already a world away from the man who had walked in.

Gone were the days of the odd jobs, the shoe-shining, the cotton fields, the day-to-day, hand-to-mouth way of life that characterizes so many of the poor and undereducated. James Brown was a man with a plan. He formed a trio, made a record, had a hit, and that was it. The rest is history, as they say, but some of it is so delicious it's worth repeating. Like, how James Brown used to shine shoes on the steps of WRDW, an Augusta, Georgia radio station; now he owns it. (Top that, Horatio baby!) Like, the old James Brown didn't know where his next meal was coming from, and now he owns a whole chain of franchised food shops called Gold Platter (well, that figures), specializing in fried fish dinners (fillet of soul?). Some dude from Georgia got up at a J. B. press conference and announced that J.B. was going to do for fried fish what Colonel Sanders had done for fried chicken. Lovers of soul food are praying it ain't so. At any rate, the Gold Platter operation is providing a lot of jobs and opportunities for local people to own their own business, as well as serving the communities where they are located with good, clean, low-priced food.

Like, the boy who used to dance for dimes nows racks up about three million a year on concerts and his earnings from records can only be guessed at. There have been two dozen singles hits since "Please, Please, Please," and the end is nowhere in sight.

Like, the $7-a-month shack has given way to at least two major mansions, in New York and Cincinnati, and super de luxe accomodations during tours. And while on tour, James Brown is not walking the right-of-ways he used to scout for coal; he has two private jet planes at his disposal and a fleet of vans for equipment and personnel.

An old proverb says that even a man's best friend can not stand to see

him become too successful. Yet James Brown has been so elegant in the ways he has used his success that he has garnered increasing love and respect rather than hatred and envy from those who have so much less than he does. If there is talent in his throat and schrewdness in his brain, there is also goodness in his heart. It's nice to be able to write that about any man. It would have been very easy for James Brown, in his fierce drive toward success and recognition, to have turned his back on all that used to be and concentrate on capturing all the goodies in life for himself. Instead, he has given himself and much of his wealth to the people. Not gestures or tokens, but real, meaningful, continuous programs that far surpass charity and slogans. Soul Brother Number One has more Soul, is very much a Brother, and is Number One all the way.

To the chief Musician, A Song or Psalm.
Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:
Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.
All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee;
they shall sing to thy name.

Psalm 66: 1, 2, 4

They Shall Sing

Mighty Clouds of Joy...Swan Silvertones...Gospel Harmonettes... Soul Stirrers...Dixie Hummingbirds...Majestic Choir...Violinaires... Celestials...Consolers...Caravans...their very names rise and soar and celebrate their music. It is music concerned solely with church and God, yet such is it's genius that it has had the profoundest influence on that most earthly, worldly, and secular of sounds, rhythm and blues. Gospel is, along with the blues, the immediate ancestor of soul music. If the blues can be considered the daddy of rhythm and blues, then gospel must be the mother, for it was straight out of gospel that the foremost soul singers and musicians came. The rhythm end of R & B comes straight out of church; so does the use of the lead singer and responding back-up chorus. Only the words are different; as one writer suggested, Aretha Franklin today sings about "My man", years ago, it would have been "My Lord"; everything else is nearly the same.

Why black life and music are so strongly under this divine influence is a fascinating study. So are the stupendous artists who are still singing it as "My Lord." Theirs is a unique world of religion-on-the-road, a continuous ecclesiastical entertainment that can be traced back to 1871. That was the year that the Fisk Jubilee Singers did something unprecedented that has lasted these hundred years. Led by their teacher, a free-born black man named George L. White who had fought for the Union in the Civil War, four boys and five girls, with little more than the clothes on their backs, left Nashville to go North. White had joined the Freedmens' Bureau in order to teach the newly freed children, but soon found that, in their music, they had much to teach the world. He organized the little group with the idea of opening the ears of those who had never heard the spirituals of the slaves to recognize that both truth and beauty did exist in black skins; perhaps also to show the children themselves that they did indeed possess something of value and pride within themselves.

The tour was not an immediate success. The group met with taunts, exclusion, hunger -all the refinements that a dominant order can impose on its outcasts. But they stuck it out, traveling northerly, and won their first applause at that long-time bastion of liberality, Oberlin, Ohio. (Oberlin college sent a large contingent of volunteers to that more recent childrens' crusade, the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964.) After Oberlin, it was New York, and then the world. Through Europe and the United States, they sang their songs; finally, seven years and $150,000 later, they returned home to found Fisk University.

Gospel music includes many different types of songs spirituals, inspirationals, jubilees— as well as those we term simply as gospel. This music, as well as the newer, secular form, the blues, which sprang from it, and jazz, which has origins in both, are unique among the musics of the world in that they have roots in two distinct and different musics and traditions -those of Africa and Europe. Perhaps this dualism accounts in part for the universal appeal of all branches of Afro-American music. By the late 1870's, the north had turned its back on the former slaves; Jim Crow had replaced William Lloyd Garrison as the personification of the "solution" to the problem. The presence and the performance of the Fisk Singers could only serve as reminders of promises broken and problems still burning. Yet, the music could not be resisted. Whoever heard it with an open heart was touched to the soul; the Fisk Singers continued to be an enormous success and influence; even today gospeleers still travel, following the pattern established by this first group.

To try to search for an understanding of the reasons people who have not shared in the black experience (except perhaps in the most negative way, as part of the oppression) embrace gospel music would probably take a deep and enormously complex examination of people as well as music. But, in addition to the above mentioned unique fusion of the mu-

sic itself, there are some obvious elements that can easily be identified and examined.

First, of course, the performers themselves. We are not concerned here with the watered-down versions of black church music as adapted for the primarily white (and patronizing) audiences of the concert stage. This is not to take anything away from Marian Anderson say, or the Golden Gate Quartet. Their way has been long and hard, but their approach has little to do with the gospel music of the churches or the secular R & B that is an offshot of church music. The power and beauty of this music, its history and living traditions, can be the study of a lifetime of listening and learning, or one can receive instant education just by listening to Shirley Caesar sing "Steal Away." Incredibly, this combination of a contemporary singer at the very height of her formidable career with a song that is probably 200 years old is a perfect example of this still vibrant art.

It is too easy to admire the immense presence of Shirley Caesar and cynically ascribe it to professionalism. An ordained Evangelist, this gifted sister and her audience both accept that it is the Lord's work she is doing, and not the promoter's. The same feeling prevails even in a secular surrounding, such as the magnificent Christmas concert at Carnegie Hall in 1969. There, in a program that got almost no advance publicity, she was joined by gospel greats Rev. James Cleveland, Jessy Dixon, the Mighty Clouds of Joy, and the Chicago Community Choir. They used no amplification; they didn't need any. There were two performances, only the latter one was well attended, and the audience was almost precisely the same people they would have been playing to had the concerts been held in a Harlem hall or church. Had there been adequate promotion, it might have been a turning point in the history of gospel. The sophisticated New York audience, which devours the best and most varied entertainment in the world, would have been exposed to something thrilling and new; I believe that their reaction may very well have been electrifying, and served to spark a great interest in gospel. Of course, it might be justifiably argued that such support is more to be despised than desired; that is based on what has happened to other forms of black music once the muddied waters of the mainstream culture came pouring into the clear stream ghetto music. In any case, the talents of a Shirley Caesar deserve the widest possible recognition.

However, one doesn't even have to be a believer to enjoy hearing this music, and enjoy is a mighty light word to convey what one experiences from a performance that transcends mere entertainment. The fervor, the intensity, the pitch of excitement, the sparks that ignite the state of a gospel performance are equalled by only one other contemporary phenomenon, James Brown, and let's face it, he's on a mission, too. Nobody else gets such exhultation and involvement from an audience. It is

Mahalia Jackson

their religion that the gospel singers are celebrating; all of the most studied professionalism in the world could not duplicate that sound, because it comes from the heart and the lungs simultaneously. There is no voice coach in the world who can teach that technique. The most forceful singers are the most fervent believers; if they weren't, they could have long ago deserted for the far more lucrative fields of pop entertainment.

Today, gospel singing is probably the least commercial of all the arts being practiced in America. It is true that tickets are sold to performances, but a good part of the take stays right in the church where the performance is held. Also, a person doesn't decide to become a gospel singer in the same way one might decide to take up any other performing career. A gospel singer is first and foremost a church member; to progress from one's own church choir to broader horizons means not only hearing a "call," but making that call heard by all one's peers as well. The top gospel artists do record, but try getting pictures or any kind of information about the gospel-makers from their recording labels! The gospel singers are wary of publicity. Many of the top artists are ministers and evangelists, and in the recording studios they do not aim for any audience other than they one they already possess. If you want to raise an objection to that statement by citing maybe "Oh Happy Day" as successfully done by the Edwin Hawkins Singers, we must point out that this is not really a gospel, but rather an inspirational, and the group itself is not directly church-affiliated.

The one gospel voice that is generally known to the public at large is Mahalia Jackson's; this mighty fortress has met success head-on and remained intact. She still refuses engagements that supply what she feels are unsuitable surroundings for sacred music. (When gospel music became a sudden and short-lived night-club fad, she was publicly indignant.) She admonished the singers who worked in the clubs (where tambourines were quaintly pressed into service as highball trays). Mahalia's voice must have really reached the upper registers that time, because saloons-gospel halls quickly went the way of all flesh.

A stubborn illness has curtailed her activity, but during the last two decades, Mahalia has gone practically nonstop. She has filled enormous auditoriums all the way from Berlin to Tel Aviv, telling it the same way she does in her own home church. Mahalia admits to being influenced by blues singers; listening to records by Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Ida Cox constituted her formal voice training. But her "career" predates that, as she had started singing in her father's church at the age of five. And while she admits to having learned much from her secular sisters, she was never tempted to go their way. Her only departure from this resolution came when she recorded with Duke Ellington; but even this was in a way closely connected with her work in gospel. The Duke had

written one of the most brilliant and moving jazz compositions of all time, "Black, Brown, and Beige," a musical history of Black America. The religious portion of the work was to express the deep significance of the church in black life; who better to voice that expression than its finest interpreter? According to Ellington, Mahalia needed a lot of convincing to do "Come Sunday," as he had titled the theme, and she finally agreed to do because of his repeated reassurances. She even helped write the lyrics. The final track of "Black, Brown, and Beige" needed no lyric. Duke Ellington opened a Bible to the 23rd Psalm ("The Lord is my sheepherd..."), told Mahalia to sing it, imporvised the music behind it, and they recorded it the next day. It is, by every conceivable criterion, one of the finest records ever made. It had a profound social as well as artistic significance.

It doesn't matter where Mahalia is singing; she takes the church with her; she could turn a tavern into a temple if she chose to. It is this integrity, the honesty of the artists, that gives gospel such power. As mentioned so many times, the biggest stars of R & B are right out of church; those who choose to stay do so out of deep conviction, and those who leave never really turn their backs on their background. They just make it serve new needs. (Aretha still occasionally sits in at her daddy's New Bethel in Detroit, and Mahila does the same in her home church.)

Among the sisters who carry on the tradition of the gospel circuit, no one stands taller than Albertina Walker. As the guiding light of the Caravans of Chicago, she has not only led a consistently great group, she has developed many of the singers who have gone on to become favorites on their own. Shirley Caesar traveled the Caravans' route, as did James Cleveland, Cassietta George, Dorothy Norwood, and James Herndon, any one of whom can light your fire and keep it burning brightly.

This tradition of the woman as leader in church music reflects and affirms much that has been written and said about the matriarchal structure of black society. This is understandable, since so much church activity has been a microcosm of that society, and in the early years after Emancipation, served the needs of a people who had yet to form familial traditions. As Du Bois pointed out, the church actually predates the family as a black institution, a natural result of the antifamily centuries of slavery. When Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith developed the audience for classic blues, they also opened up a new field of legitimate employment for black women. Until then, there had been only domestic work and the church. It is not surprising then, that so many superbly talented black women are still to be found in church. Nor should talent be taken only in the narrower sense of musical ability. Women with great gifts for administration, organization, and management still oper-

ate very successfully at all levels of influence and importance. Albertina Walker is prime example of all of these, as was Roberta Martin, who died in 1969, and exerted much the same sort of influence; and the late Edna Cooke, who introduced spoken sermonettes on her recordings.

The women do not monopolize the field, however; there are outstanding male gospeleers, both soloists and groups. Rev. James Cleveland has already been mentioned; he is current titleholder of "King of Gospel." Probably the top attraction on the gospel curcuit, his rich voice sells a great many records, and his personal magnetism has propped up many a potential backslider and kept her firmly in the fold!

Outstanding among the other men of the cloth who keep the spirits soaring are the Reverends Cleophus Robinson, Jessy Dixon, Charles Taylor, and Claude Jeeter (who has recorded with Shirley Caesar). These pastors work far from their home churches, and much of the richness and vitality of today's gospel comes from the cross-pollination of ideas and style caused by the constant traveling of the top artists. This is no new development, as you know; it can be said to date from the Fisk group, although today's groups do not travel for the same purpose. The gospel singers appear at each others' churches; they make joint appearances at other churches or special concerts. For example, Aretha Franklin first met the late Sam Cooke when he was the lead singer of the Soul Stirrers while appearing at her father's church, where she was in the choir. Many are on the road two hundred or more days each year. When several artists appear on the same program, there is little of backstage backbiting. They all feel that they are out doing the Lord's work, and since there are almost all from the same denomination (Baptist), there is scant competition.

The traveling gospel groups received their greatest impetus from the feverish revivalist outbreaks that hit the American public periodically. These religious phenomena are common to both the black and white populace, and although the last really national epidemic hit during the 1920's, today's gospel events, especially those in store-front urban and backwoods rural churches, still have much of the feeling of those old-timey camp meetings. Well, sinners will always be sinners, they are there to be saved, and the mesmerizing music of black gospel will keep affecting its hearers. Religion is, after all, the least changing of all man's institutions, and a gospel "golden oldie" may have been on the charts (theoretically) for over two hundred years. New material is always being written by the artists, and new, dynamic arrangements of old favorites are usually very well received by the public.

Gospel is not only a term to be applied to a group of particular songs, it is also a musical style, one that can be applied very effectively to other sorts of songs. For example, on a recent album, one of the outstanding male gospel groups, the Violinaires of Chicago, did a gospel rendition

Evangelist Shirley Caeser and the Caeser Singers

of "Salt of the Earth," a tune by Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger and Keith Richard. It was transformed into a perfect gospel number; its lyric, with its touching mention of hardworking people, dreaded diseases, humbleness, is perceived as not being sacred music only by the repeated phrase, "Let's drink." (Many gospel artists will not appear anywhere that liquor is served. That was Mahalia's main objection to the "gospel" nightclubs.) Bob Dylan is another writer whose material is very well suited to the gospel style; this is not surprising, since so many of his songs are based on gospel forms and themes "Blowin' in the Wind," "Any Day Now," "I Shall Be Free"—and he was one of the first balladeers of the civil rights movement "The Times They Are A-Changin'," "Hattie Carroll," etc. Perhaps this is the reason that the best interpreters of Dylan's material, aside from Dylan himself, are black—Nina Simone and Richie Havens, specifically. They bring the material back to its original source and deepen it with the admixture of their experiences. I would dearly love to hear Mahalia Jackson singing Dylan's songs!

The famous "Freedom Songs" of the movement, from its anthem, "We Shall Overcome" right on, were straight out of church. (Down in Mississippi, folk singer Pete Seeger met a young lady named Bernice Reagon who possessed a marvelous voice. She expressed keen interest in hearing those "Freedom Songs" everybody was talking about; at her first sing-in she exclaimed, "Why, that's nothing but our down-home songs you're all singing!" Verses to "We Shall Overcome" were constantly being improvised and added to suit the time and place, in the classic manner of the call-and-response form where the leader sings out new verses to the chorus that "bases" him; except for such improvisation, the lyrics of "We Shall Not Be Moved, "Woke Up this Mornin' With My Mind Stayed on Freedom," "Oh Freedom" remained intact. Further evidence of what the slaves were really into with their "spirituals!" If gospel changed little in three hundred years, so have the conditions under which it was born and grew.

Getting back to the groups, we find that the majority still conform to the traditional songs and themes of gospel. The Swan Silvertones of Pittsburgh consider their singing as a service, not a performance, even when all the apparatus of the recording engineers are present in the church with them. This group of men (four voices, three musicians) have been fixtures on the gospel circuit for thirty years. Their work makes use of the techniques of the ministry; they have been described as possessing as soloists, a "pleader," a "pronouncer and declarer," and a "pacifier and assurer." Their lead singer, Carl Davis, has a falsetto that would turn an R & B man green with envy, and the contrasting textures of the other voices in the group give the Swans a tone that is astoundingly rich and versatile enough to work wonders within a narrow reper-

toire. That is, they can supply sufficient musical excitement by use of their voices without having to venture outside strict gospel material.

The gospel group with the greatest longevity would have to be the Dixie Hummingbirds. Lead singer Ira Tucker has been with the group since it was first organized back in 1939 by his fellow South Carolinian, James Davis. The members now all make their homes in Philadelphia, and if the Dixie part of the name sounds a little dated, it's understandable. It is a natural thing for people to be attached to the part of earth where they first saw light, even if it is cruel and inhospitable to them now; Dixie must have some nostalgic associations to many of the group's listeners. In any case, the Dixie Hummingbirds deservedly have been a familiar fixture on the gospel circuit for so long, that anything about them has a classical aura about it. Their singing style is as new and fresh-sounding as this morning because it springs from an underlying religious conviction that is constantly revitalizing the gospel-maker. It is this wellspring of faith that gives the Hummingbirds and, indeed all the great gospeleers, their marvelous ability to get the message across with such artistry, an artistry without artifice.

Almost two decades after the Hummingbirds started making appearances, a group that reaffirms the agelessness of gospel grew up in Los Angeles. Chronologically and spiritually, the Mighty Clouds of Joy could almost be the sons of the Dixie Hummingbirds. Yet, because they are based on the same solid foundation of faith and music, they can hold their own with any of the gospel groups around. This six-man talent squad represents a new generation in other ways, too. Unlike most other groups whose membership comes mostly from the south, or in a few cases the northern ghettos, the Clouds come out of the great westward migration that hit its peak during the forties. Jobs in the great defense industries were plentiful and many poor rural southern black people moved all the way to California to seek better economic opportunities. Blacks in the southwestern United States have always had strong musical traditions of their own, and have produced many fine jazz and R & B artists. The Mighty Clouds of Joy started out by performing for church functions in their own neighborhood, but they worked ceaselessly to perfect their sound; when the opportunity to record came, they were quite ready; so ready, in fact, that their first release, "Ain't Got Long Here" was an immediate gospel hit and the Mighty Clouds of Joy became a permanent stars in the gospel skies.

Another kind of appeal is that held by the Five Blind Boys of Alabama. My own favorite exponent of soul has often drawn a parallel between loss/compensation and soul. Scientifically, it has been proven that loss of one of our physical attributes brings compensation in the form of increased power in another; the loss of one arm will cause a man to double the strength of the remaining limb; the loss of sight will be made

up by an almost supernatural acuteness in hearing. Add to this the suffering that the loss causes, and remember the significance of suffering in the definition of soul, and one gets soul artists of the power of Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, jazzman Roland Kirk, and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama; each has never seen printed music, but each must hear music with a preciseness that is probably beyond the comprehension of most of us.

Since gospel audiences consist, for the most part, of people for whom suffering is as much a part of daily life as is their hard-earned bread, the Blind Boys' praise of God is all the more stirring. The uplifting of those voices, the immediacy of their joyousness touch the hardest heart of the unbelieveing. For those who believe in music, and its efficacy, the Boys are an especially heady tonic.

The one group that has crossed many musical rivers and yet not watered down its gospel sound is the Staple Singers. They have been a big draw for many years at folk music festivals, not because they "do" folk material, but because the authenticity of their sound is unmistakeable; the audience that is interested in "real" American music can recognize that the Staple family sings what is perhaps the most important native sound. The Staple style, which they developed for their own enjoyment, is not as driving and heavily textured as that of most of the gospel groups we have been talking about. It seemed easier for nonblack audiences to respond to it, and the Staples took advantage of that fact to bring the message to concert halls and college campuses. They sing of freedom, they sing of hardship, they sing of pain, but always with trust in the better days ahead. They put the song of the slave into the ears of those who might otherwise never have heard it. Although they have achieved great commercial success, they have not sacrificed their integrity for it. The proof is that they can still bring the house down, even if the audience consists of one-hundred-per-cent gospel diehards, raised on the music and wanting nothing else. And no matter how great the demand or lucrative the offer, the group will not perform in a night club or any place that serves liquor. On this point, they stand fast with Mahalia and all the other stalwarts of gospel whose respect for their music reigns supreme over all other considerations.

The source of the Staples' strength is a family as well as a church tradition. The mainstay of the group is Pop Staple, who is completely the partriarch in every sense of the word. His son, Pervis, is the other male voice, and the quartet is rounded out by two of his daughters, Cleotha and Mavis. Another daughter, Yvonne, who doesn't want a professional career, does the group's secretarial chores, and the youngest Staple, Cynthia, is biding her time till her daddy feels that she's old enough for the life of the road. Mama Staple is a beautiful woman, as musically gifted as the others in the family, but she prefers just being mama and

The Staple Singers

the source of strength and inspiration that a traveling family needs. Except for young Cynthia, all the Staples are married, and the solidity of their marriages, such a rarity among constantly traveling musicians, is further testimony of the teachings of the elder Staples and the strength and meaning of family ties to all of the members of this remarkable group. It is all the more impressive because this feeling comes not from a comfortable, middle-class environment where strong, stable, family relationships are taken for granted, but from the Mississippi Delta life, where conditions tend to tear apart individuals as well as families. Delta life afforded the Staples one way of loosening up after a day of back-breaking, mind-mangling labor: music. To sit and pick at a banjo and sing the songs that were also born out of the life of the life-taking delta was the means of release for Roebuck Staple.

As his family grew and the land could no longer give them even meager support, Pop Roebuck moved them all to Chicago. They became active in church, and the proud parents happily discovered that their children were musically inclined. The evening entertainment grew and expanded into singing in various churches in the area. By 1948, Roebuck was able to turn his back on the stockyards and other sources of employment that had sustained them, and the Staple Singers became a full-time gospel group. Never did the temptations and novelty of big-city life turn the Staples from their course. All of the factors that so frequently lead to the disintegration of family life were countered and conquered by Roebuck and Oceola Staple before their children could be adversely affected. The closeness of their family life is very acurately reflected in the tightness of their musical arrangements and the obvious delight they take in their work and working together. If there is such a thing as the first family of gospel, it is surely the Staples.

There is still another branch of the great gospel tree, and that is the magnificent aggregation of voices called a choir. These are not traveling groups; a number of forty or fifty or more people makes that an impossibility. Therefore, many of the choirs have names that identify them with a geographical area rather than a single church. Thus, we have the Southwest Michigan Choir, the Chicago Community Choir (associated with Jesse Jackson, a formidable community leader, and his Operation Breadbasket), and the Northern California State Youth Choir, presently known as the Edwin Hawkins Singers.

To hear the alternate hush and roar of voices that constitutes a great choir is a musical thrill. It is also a delight to the eye to see a large choir, clad in matching pastel robes, mount a stage. There is a unity in dress that matches the vocal unity of the singers, and both are perfect expressions of the oneness of God that the choir is celebrating. The strength of the choir lies more in the smooth harmony and perfect timing of the voices than in the contrasts of the call-and-response pattern of

the smaller gospel groups. The songs tend more to the spiritual and inspirational forms than the more exhuberant rings and shouts sometimes given by individual members of small groups. The sheer force of numbers of the choirs and the perfection of their training gives these enormous ensembles of angelicism a glory all their own.

It would be impossible to chart all the great artists of gospel here. But if one is to gain any understanding and appreciation of soul music, it must start in gospel. This is where all of the greats of soul started, and to trace both the art and the artists to their source always brings the search back to gospel. The voices that star the gospel trail are less heard by us and their names less known to us, but their artistry is all the greater for not having strayed from the original path. Gospel has never achieved spectacular commercial success because it is still too raw, too real, too full of truth and pain for most people to take. It is entertainment, but only in the sense that the books of the Bible are stories. Gospel music has always filled a compelling need. It sustained and uplifted black people; it made a home in the hearts of the uprooted; it eased the oppressed; it brought a richness to the poorest of lives, and sang out its beauty in the midst of ugly squalor. Now, the United States, we are told, is the wealthiest, most successful nation in the history of the whole world. What need have we for such music?

STAR TIME

Aretha Franklin—Lady Soul

During the twenties we had a King (Oliver), a Duke (Ellington), and a Count (Basie). After that, royalty in America went into a decline until 1967, when Aretha arrived. Now we have Lady Soul, the reigning female vocalist of our time!

Aretha is the classic example of the church-trained gospel singer who is at the foundation of the whole soul music sweep. Her father, the Reverend C. L. Franklin, is still pastor of the New Bethel Baptist Church of Detroit, and Aretha, as well as her sisters Erma and Carolyn, first sang in the youth choir of that church. The entire family (there are also two brothers) also toured the gospel circuit, that great cross-country current of church music that keeps the top gospel groups in constant touch with each other. Thus, the young Aretha met Lou Rawls while on tour, and Sam Cooke when, as lead singer of the Soul Stirrers, he sang at her father's church. To further enrich Aretha's early life there were other, more secular personalities, like Dinah Washington, who were house guests of the Franklins'. The great Dinah is Aretha's admitted idol, but she just as readily confesses that she modeled her voice style more closely after her father's than anyone else's. The elder Franklin still records gospel music, his own and others, and two of the gospel sides Aretha cut as a little girl are still considered classics.

Such was the power of Aretha's voice that, from the time she turned fourteen, she was her father's featured soloist. Here was where she made her first "rep," among the gospel singers, who were already beginning to call her "queen of gospel music," as Dinah Washington was being called "queen of the blues" by her peers. When she was eighteen however, Aretha heard another call.

A family visitor, a musician named Major Wiley, was convinced that Aretha had a great future singing commercially. It was harder to convince the essentially shy girl that she could make it in nightclubs and on records; however, she finally made the trek to New York to cut some demos.

The power of her voice was so great that she landed a five-year contract with Columbia Records on her first audition. (Interestingly, the man who signed Aretha was John Hammond, a Columbia executive who was instrumental in bringing an impressive number of black artists, from Billie Holiday on, to national attention. The Hammonds are an American musical dynasty. Mr. Hammond's father developed the organ that bears his name, and the Hammond of this generation is a blues singer.) While with Columbia, Aretha turned out several albums, but something was wrong; Aretha was there, yet she wasn't. The distinctive voice was unmistakeably Aretha's (nobody else could sound like that), but to say that her fire had been dampened was to put it mildly. It wasn't until that contract expired, five long years later, that the fire was relit.

All was not a mere marking of time during that dry run. Aretha, accompanying herself on piano, worked to nightclub audiences in her old foot-stomping, fire-breathing, gloriously churchy way, and those audiences loved the high, hot, flavoring she brought to the blues. But Aretha was still very young, shy, uncertain of what she really wanted, and with her religious upbringing, she was never really quite at home in the clubs. The paying customers in the clubs would never have guessed it, but Aretha longed to be back in her father's house in Detroit, safe in the family fold and shut off from the outside whenever she chose to be.

This essential shyness has never left her. Even today, at the height of her success, she would prefer playing one-nighters in concert than have to face a much closer audience in the nightly give-and-take of an extended club engagement. Fortunately, her piece of the take is so big at this point that there are damned few clubs that can even afford her; when the new and enormous International in Las Vegas, one that could, beckoned, Aretha became so ill that she never made her opening night and Frank Sinatra had to fill in for her. (Well, what else are friends for?)

The five lean years finally drew to a close, and then came the turning point. Aretha signed with Atlantic Records; they immediately hustled her (in the finer sense of the word) to a hitherto unheard of place quaintly called Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Neither Aretha, nor Atlantic, nor

Aretha Franklin

Muscle Shoals, Alabama, nor indeed any of us, will ever be the same again.

The first tune they turned her loose on was "I Never Loved a Man the Way I love You," and two weeks after it was released, one quarter of a million copies had been sold. Both the single and the same-named album earned gold records for Aretha, and, before long, she had nine more of the shiny things decorating her walls back home in old Detroit. (The other million-copy-selling singles were "Since You've Been Gone," "Respect," "Chain of Fools," "Baby, I Love You," "Think," "I Say a Little Prayer," and "See Saw." The million-dollar-sales albums were "Lady Soul" and "Aretha Now.")

Reflected in that list and in her other chart items is her brilliant ability to take anybody's material and make it completely her own. Even a song that has been a hit, closely identified with another artist, becomes a completely new piece of business in Aretha's hands (and lungs). It takes a certain amount of talent to turn straw into gold. But to turn gold into more gold, that takes almost genius.

Yet Aretha has done it over and over again: with Otis Redding's "Respect," Sam Cooke's "Shake," Dionne Warwick's "I Say a Little Prayer," the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby." She breathes so much life and so much of herself into every song she sings that the listener can't help but be caught up in that outpouring of emotion. It becomes almost too much to have to experience in the three minutes of a record cut. Three minutes of Aretha can leave you exhausted. Yet her excellent phrasing and the clarity of her expression is evidence enough that there's a lot more happening than just extraordinarily good belting.

There is no other female vocalist today who can be compared to Aretha. After those years of relative obscurity she has reached the realm of incredible popularity, incredible that is, to anyone who hasn't heard her (which in itself seems rather incredible). Walk past a record store, switch on a radio, be near a juke box if Aretha is on, you'll know it from the first note. Even to an untrained ear, it's instant recognition. The power and drive of that tremendous voice that hammers down notes like nails can turn, with a pause, into the lapping and purring of a kitten with a saucer of sweet cream. She is the earth mother exhorting, preacher woman denouncing, militant demanding, forgotten woman wailing. She is praying for you one minute, laying in wait for you the very next. But whether sailing on a happy tune or submerging into a sad one, she will be heard. What is so very beautiful, everyone who hears her thinks she is singing for him alone. People explain Aretha to each other, each feeling that he hears something that nobody else does.

Her universitality is certainly a great part of her appeal. She speaks for women in their condition as women; to men she speaks in different voices. The good man is lavishly praised, as every man feels is his due.

a Franklin

The not-so-good man is scolded soundly, as he knows deep inside he deserves to be. A man can stand at a bar, drink in hand (and one inside), listening to Aretha from out the juke box, and chuckle and bang the bar and nod his head in recognition of what she's saying, and maybe he'll even say out loud to no one in particular, "Ain't that just like my old lady!" And when Aretha is just having fun, and she wants everyone to join in, and invites us to "Shake;" her own enjoyment is so infectious, no one can resist.

It takes a lot for a performer to be able to affect an audience in that way; skill, technical virtuousity, professional slickness can never, by themselves, achieve it. In the old days of ten or fifteen years ago, they used to say, "You gotta have heart." But today, to really get across, to really get to the people, everybody knows what you gotta have is "soul." And soul is what Aretha has got more of than practically anybody. Sammy Davis Jr. said it much better when he was hosting television's "Hollywood Palace" and introduced her. "Aretha Franklin doesn't have soul, she *is* soul."

As we have already defined soul, in part, as the ability to endure pain, it shouldn't be assumed that the much-blessed Aretha has been spared this part of the package. The girl whose early life was steeped in family tradition had a mother who left the family when Aretha was six; the adolescent who professed she was looking forward to becoming just another happy housewife had a broken marriage after bearing three sons. Her first important in-person appearence after the first records hit had to be cancelled when she broke her arm. Her schedule of concerts and recording dates had gotten so heavy that late in 1969 her doctor insisted she cancel all personal appearances for the balance of the year. She continued to record, but on a much more protracted and much less hectic schedule than before.

Aretha would still rather stay hidden from the general public, which seems to be a direct refutation of the way she communicates with an audience. However, she feels that her music says everything for her, and that the details of her private life are hers alone. She hates interviews, and will go through all sorts of subterfuge to avoid them, relying on a native slyness that would read like downright deviousness were it to come from anyone less open and direct than Aretha. Even when *Time* magazine featured her on its cover (considered to be one of the highest accolades this civilization can bestow on one of its worthies), she couldn't sit still long enough to answer any real questions. One thing she *will* share with the world is her family. She is terrifically proud of them, and, if they are in the audience at one of her concerts, she delights in introducing them. Before launching into her next song, she will say "There's a certain young lady seated out there that I would like all of you to meet—my sister Carolyn!" And while the bewildered lighting man is

trying to find Carolyn in the vast auditorium. Aretha is standing on stage and beaming with an almost maternal pride. She likes introducing her father too. Now she gets more of a chance to introduce them all, as Carolyn has now followed the earlier lead of sister Erma and has struck out on her own as a recording artist. (See chapter on "Those Sweet Sisters" for more about the other Franklin girls.) Aretha and Carolyn were exceptionally close; Carolyn helped write some of Aretha's songs and sang in the background on the early Atlantic recordings. Everyone associated with Aretha seems to have some of the magic rub off: her backup group, after her sisters went out on their own, was the Sweet Inspirations. They are also recording very successfully under their own name. Rather than credit all of this to magic or some other equally mysterious force, let's just say that Aretha uses only top talent around her, and the success of her associates is to be expected. (Maybe some of the magic might be explained by the presence of a very pixyish individual, Jerry Wexler, Atlantic executive vice-president, at all of Aretha's sessions. Who can say?)

Since Aretha is barely past her twenties, her story and glories should

Since Aretha is barely past her twenties, her story and glories should be one of the continuing sagas of our time. She should be belting them out well into the next millenium, I should think. And, considering the precariousness of our present situation, should the nuclear holocaust bring about Judgement Day a little prematurely, we will at least have the consolation of Aretha leading us all to kingdomcome with the right beat and the Lord's own sound.

The Formative Fifties

At the midpoint of the twentieth century three important areas of black music were blooming into full flower. Jazz was reaching perhaps its finest hour, folk had become one of the most influential segments of popular music, and R & B was about to give birth to rock. Of the three, R & B was the least known to the country at large. It was still played on radio stations geared to ghetto audiences, but only the very hippest of the white kids knew where to buy R & B records. Most downtown stores didn't carry them.

On the other hand, the black heroes of the folk movement -Odetta, Nina Simone, Miriam Makeba, Josh White, and Leadbelly were being well received by white audiences. The most interesting figure to come out of the whole scene was Harry Belafonte. We say most interesting because, for the first time in history, white America permitted herself a black male-sex symbol. There was no old stereotype into which his open male virility and appeal could be safely stashed away. Belafonte slashed his shirt fronts to the waist, and the ladies loved it. His smoothness and polish unquestionably helped win him universal acceptance, but he was a product of the ghetto and never forgot it. In fact, his career started on the stage of the Apollo Theater in Harlem, where he won one

Chuck Berry

of their famous amateur nights. Belafonte became one of the superstars of the fifties and sixties. Also, as an active supporter of civil rights causes, he became a confidant of men like Martin Luther King, Jr. His television appearances had enormous ratings, but the medium wasn't ready to give in to his demands. When he was offered a show of his own, his insistence on having other black talent on his series led to a cancellation of the project; queasy network executives were afraid of losing southern audiences. To his credit, Belafonte wouldn't give in. Instead, he sold records, made movies, and never stopped packing them in at concerts even after the bloom was long gone from the folk field. He made money, of course, but he never Uncle Tommed to do it. He must be recognized as a pioneer in making white audiences admit out loud that black (man) is beautiful, too.

Even more exciting than the developing folk music was the jazz of the fifties. New York folk enthusiasts crowded the Greenwich Village area, but midtown, especially 52nd Street, was the mecca of the jazz world. On a given night you could hear some of the most famous names in jazz: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, Lester Young, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Count Basie, Milt Jackson, Charlie Mingus, Earl Hines, Kenny Dorham, Jonah Jones, Roy Eldridge, Art Farmer, Sonny Stitt, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, and others. It was a golden age, a renaissance, a heyday. Jazz was the darling of the intellectuals, the middle class (black and white), the college crowd. For perhaps the first time, it was being taken seriously by critics and scholars and classical musicians. It was hailed as the first truly American art form, and it was beautiful. Lots of musicians were working (which in itself is a high water mark any time it happens). Rich, strong, diverse, the music was in demand. It was broad enough to contain different styles within itself. There was cool, there was swing, there was bop and all its aftermaths, and if anybody couldn't find what they liked, they weren't really trying. On the commercial level, jazz was at its zenith; there are a lot of people who will tell you it was at its artistic height as well. (That point is debatable.) What cannot be argued is that jazz did hit its peak of popularity in the early years of the decade. And the musical giants mentioned here are still working and are still esteemed. Their work has lost none of its luster.

In 1955, Bird died. It was like an eclipse of the sun. Life, the life of jazz, went on; but it was not the same. In some mystical way, the whole scene had coalesced around Bird. Even the musicians who didn't play his way felt the loss. He left a golden musical legacy. However, after his death, what had been cracks of dissension between musicians over style became crevices into which careers disappeared. In a rush to emulate him, lesser men took on aspects of a life style that were de-

structive even to Bird himself Because he failed to make scheduled appearances, or arrived late, musicians hoped to capture a touch of the Bird magic by doing the same. His use of drugs, which he fought so hard, was all too readily picked up. But, while his worst habits could be emulated no one could emulate his sound Jazz appreciation was no longer a sign of rebellion. Audiences began to look at the shifting jazz scene with disfavor: the older members of audiences couldn't keep up with much of the new sounds that were evolving, and the younger ones were suddenly listening to a very, very, different drummer. That different drummer was beating out a rhythm that was about to make the Pied Piper look like a piker. Youth was on the move, and it was the big beat of rock and roll that was moving them. As rock and roll, a name that could include white influences, R & B was moving into the musical mainstream and, like a river that has been dammed up too damned long, it was going to overwhelm anything standing in its way.

Surprisingly, the first breakthrough for this once strictly segregated music came in the south. Salesmen for the record companies were noticing that their sales were no longer following the classic patterns. The designation "race records" had given way by the late 1940's to "rhythm and blues," and stores in white neighborhoods were faced with a growing demand by their customers for R & B. The kids were dancing to it. At first they heard it on the airwaves of the R & B stations, beamed to the ghetto. Then, disc jockeys in the big metropolitan areas north and south started tentatively playing R & B. As the fifties progressed, the use of R & B on pop stations increased until it was the dominant music.

Many of the stars who had appealed to the ghetto audiences during the forties and in the early fifties had set the tone, and many of them continued to attract new listeners and fans. Ray Charles, Ruth Brown, Dinah Washington, Wynonie Harris, and Johnny Otis, among the established names, increased their already sizeable following. They were soon joined by new names, as R & B became the longest-lived "fad" ever to hit pop music.

Out of literally hundreds of exciting performers, there were three newcomers who dominated the decade. First came one who hit the charts as early as 1950, Fats Domino. Born Antoine, he was one of nine children in a New Orleans family with important musical associations. His father was a violinist and his uncle played with such legendary New Orleans musicians as Kid Ory and Papa Celestin. Fats was attracted to a piano as a child; by the time he was ten, he was playing for pennies in the local bars and honky-tonks. He supported himself at various kinds of jobs, but it was clear that piano was going to be his real thing. He played in the style of another piano Fats (Fats Waller), but his own unique personality and songwriting abilities were perfectly suited to the mood of the fifties. Today he's back on the scene as one of the authentic heroes

of the rock and roll revival, and the kids who were too young before are catching up with Fats the second time around.

Little Richard had a glittering career in more ways than one. He set the style for flash that still sends sparks flying out over the footlights. If he stood still on stage, he'd look like an ice palace, black-timbered, it's true, but caked and frosted with silver. More substantially, he sold more than thirty million records in two years' time, kind of a record in itself. He was a tremendous success in England, which we only discovered when those English groups started arriving in droves in the sixties, all doing Little Richard's hits of the fifties. As leader of his own group for a good number of years, he ran a tight ship; out of that group had come a number of top musicians, for example, Chuck Berry and Jimi Hendrix (another noted dresser).

Most influential of these was Chuck Berry. He is considered to have turned more people on to R & B than any other single performer. His first record, "Maybelline" was one of the biggest selling disc ever made. In addition to dazzling showmanship, and an audience-winning musicality, Berry brought something else to the scene, a sense of humor. His lyrics could be outrageously funny, especially to the teens who latched on to him immediately; his subject matter was very relevant to the young. His success was instrumental in showing the record companies who their buyers really were. The record business is a giant industry today because it has continued to gear its product to the youth market. A major disc jockey once characterized all of rock as variations on a theme by Chuck Berry. As a youngster, he sang in the church choir in a St. Louis Baptist congregation, and always had an interest in music. What really got him going was a meeting with the master of the blues guitar Muddy Waters. Muddy was recording for Chess in Chicago. He arranged for an audition for Chuck, which led to the recording of "Maybelline." Berry did not tailor his material to suit white audiences. His light lyrics and authentic R & B beat were irresistable to the kids on both sides of the color line. When he sang, "I got a rocking pneumonia I need a shot of rhythm and blues," every kid who could understand English caught the infection (including a group of four boys in Liverpool who grew up to become the Beatles, and had one of their first hits with this tune). His was the most pervasive influence on popular music in the fifties; it is still too soon to try to measure its extent. Nuances of the Berry flavoring turn up in the most unexpected places. In the early sixties, a whole subculture grew up around the sport of surfing. Its Hawaii and California born images of clean-cut, all-American beach bums were a far cry from ghetto life, as was its esoteric language. Yet, listen to the big hit of surfdom's number one prophets, the Beach Boys, "Surfin' USA," and what you'll be hearing is Chuck Berry's "Sweet Little Sixteen." After the surfing fad went into the soup (that's one of their

Little Richard

own expressions), and the English thing came in, we were once more treated to a large dosage of Chuck Berry. Today there's barely a white rock group that comes to the fore that doesn't acknowledge its debt to him, some openly in the liner notes, others just vamping with the material. Since these newies are always arising, it is impossible to gauge the ultimate extent of his influence.

Another big phenomenon of the phenomenon laden fifties was the advent of the groups. Once again, honors go to the churches whose choirs were the predecessors of groups. Not only did the groups repeat the beat they had individually learned there, they fitted their songs into the classic call-and-response pattern of that good gospel sound. It was the perfect format. The lead singer was backed by the rest of the group, and the conviction that poured into the singing gave R & B groups a power and immediacy that nothing else in popular music could come close to. Volume just added to the feeling of conviction, and the kids just loved all that volume.

The early fifties groups fell into two basic categories: the kennel and the aviary groups. Never famous for originality when a close copy could do, the record industry was impressed by the success of a group called the Ravens. In short order, there were the Robins (who later became the Coasters), the Orioles, the Flamingoes, the Crows, the Penquins, the Wrens. They all had hits. The four-legged contingent included the Terriers and the Spaniels, who made it, and uncounted others who didn't. There was also a contingent of car groups: the Cadillacs, the Impalas and, unfortunately, the Edsels, who probably never got out of the parking lot, so to speak.

As the music grew more sophisticated so did the performers and the really excellent groups began to hit. The Chords, the Clovers, and especially the Drifters and the Coasters set the standards and were closely followed by the Platters, the Orioles, the Royals, Billy Ward and the Dominoes, Hank Ballard and the Midnighters, and the Moonglows. These all-male groups, they gave a gospel-laden delivery to their torchy songs, and pretty much set the style of the era. Although there were notable female vocalists with long strings of successes, like Dinah Washington, LaVern Baker, Ruth Brown, Little Esther Phillips and Etta James, no really significant girl groups appeared on the scene until the sixties. However, male-female pairs like Mickey and Sylvia and Ike and Tina Turner garnered enormous popularity during this decade. It was still unquestionably a time of male dominance in the music.

Most of the male voices who are still outstandingly popular today first attracted national attention during these years. Ray Charles cut his first hit in 1951, and quickly became the "Genius" whose voice and prestige have never faltered. Lloyd Price scored in 1952 with an original tune called "Lawdy Miss Clawdy." It was also a good year for Little

Walter. In 1956 a newcomer named James Brown appeared on the charts for the first time with "Please, Please, Please." The year 1957 was the year for Bobby Bland as well as Sam Cooke; the following year gave us Jackie Wilson and Roy Hamilton. At the very end of the decade, Brook Benton launched several hits with Dinah Washington before resuming work as a single.

Still other male entertainers who helped establish the fifties as soul territory were three whose careers were older than the decade: Amos Milburn, Ray Brown, and Charles Brown. They were favorites before most people knew there was such a thing as R & B. Along with a young returnee from World War II named Cecil Gant, they helped pave the way for new forms that came from the older blues that had until then held sway among black audiences. Gant brought boogie woogie out of the rent-party function it had been serving, and into radios and turn-tables. Record companies were forced to produce fine piano-playing that might have otherwise been lost forever.

There were some fine R & B men whose careers seemed to closely parallel the fifties, both in chronology and the mood of the times. Johnny Otis was an especially productive force, both as a performer and as a song writer. After several years of retirement, we are promised that the seventies will see him active again. At age 15, his son is a virtuoso guitarist, so at least we know what his daddy was doing during those years he didn't record.

Also active during the decade, with fine releases a perennial happening, were Johnny Ace and the late Chuck Willis.

As the fifties started, a new day was dawning, but even those who were to be most directly concerned could not have an inkling of what was coming. Looking back now, it is easy to see that the development of black music once again was foreshadowing and illuminating the black experience from which it springs. For the first time in nearly a century, the law would look upon black people as people, and white people would listen to black music as music, and not a commodity to be whitened, lightened, and stolen for their consumption. Into the fifties, it was still the custom for white artists to record their versions of R & B hits to "cover" the mass market. These recordings became known in the music business as covers. The practice predates the record industry; in fact it is the basis for that godawful thing known as the minstrel show, vestiges of which are still lingering today. White men took the musical forms of the slaves; in order to demean the helpless blacks, they put on blackface in ridiculous caricature and assumed postures meant to portray black stupidity, laziness, and other despicable characteristics. Actually, the minstrels were a second-hand burlesque of white forms since, at this point in history, black people had not developed a secular music or dances of their own and were themselves merely imitating

what they saw their masters doing. However, minstrels started the trend, and soul has been musical pickings ever since.

The so-called jazz age which should have created some millionaire black musicians did no such thing. What it did create were some millionaire white musicians who merely diluted the stronger, richer modes of jazz for the mainstream audience. They also kept the airwaves, the downtown ballrooms, hotels, recording sessions, and anywhere where there were better paying jobs, lily white. Of course, there were some breakthroughs; there always are; but it never happened on a scale broad enough to justify the larceny and injustice. When things became too difficult to handle (musically), a black arranger would be hired. Black bands worked, but under worse conditions and for less money than the white musicians. And of course, the glory went with the gold. As always. Most white people thought that jazz was the sole creation and property of Paul Whiteman, and danced their lives away to ideas of Count Basie, of whom they never heard till much later.

But by the mid fifties this had changed. The kids who wanted soul music wanted the real thing, not some warmed-over imitations. And they could get it. Soul was suddenly everywhere. Why bother with the limited imitations when the real thing was available? Black music was flooding the mainstream American culture as black people were finally entering the mainstream of American life. (It wasn't until well into the 1960's that soul people realized just how polluted that mainstream was, and started to move out of it again, this time by their own choice. But that's another phase which will be explored later. At this time, the fight was still for integration and equal rights.)

Anyone who fails to see the connection between politics and culture within the black experience in America (and perhaps it is just as true of any other people in any other country) is missing a very important point. And that point has not been lost on the White Citizens Councils and the KKK down south. There, they plaster juke boxes and public places with stickers imploring white parents not to permit their children to listen to soul music (they don't call it that, by the way), or buy records by black performers. They understand that once you accept the value of a given culture, it must follow that your ideas about the people who created that culture are bound to change. Music of any kind creates a community of feeling that brings those who listen closer together, if only for the moment of that shared experience. If the experience is a pleasing one, it leads to further exploration of the culture that produced it. It would be ridiculous to suggest that the universal approval that soul music is receiving is going to wipe out race prejudice single-handedly or overnight. But it would also be a fallacy not to recognize the role that the music has played in bringing people, especially young people, together. You can see it any night at the big concert

Bo Diddley

halls, like Bill Graham's Fillmores East and West. The audiences are not only digging the acts, they are digging each other, grooving to the music, and they are interested in each others' reactions to it.

This generation of white kids has not grown up on the prejudices of their elders, who only permitted the most menial of roles for blacks; who at times relegate them to a sort of castrated subspecies of humanity. No, the kids today know too much about the realities of black life; they don't despise the products of this life; they idolize them. In getting closer to the music, they have learned to identify with a B. B. King. They scorn the superficial white imitator, and save their praise only for the nonblack who can add more and different layers of meaning to the black music they have so studiously absorbed. Thus, the idea of a white-made "cover" of a B. B. King record today is unthinkable, as would be the thought of a popular, young white guitarist playing blues not acknowledging B. B.'s influence on him. And it must be admitted that the reaction of these kids is a far cry from the mindless antics of their immediate ancestors These aren't the swooning, shreiking, bobbysoxers of a generation ago; these are kids who are knowledgeable about what they dig, and sit through a performance in quiet respect, if not awe. (At least they sit quietly until the music gets to them so tuff they can't sit still. Then the idol onstage smiles his invitation to get with it.) And in the same way, the black artist, so used to the ways of larceny and lies from the oppressor, knows who among the white artists are for real and, in a sense, hip their audience to it. So both a B. B. and a James Brown will dig a group like the Rolling Stones, because they are real, and they too have paid their dues, but mostly because they have listened carefully to soul music, and have not stolen it, but added to it the truth they have learned from their lives. (For much of their 1969 American tour, the Stones insisted on having B. B. King with them. Also, by featuring Ike and Tina Turner in front of their enormous audiences, they were instrumental in bringing that extraordinary pair to the attention of the musical mainstream)

Although all of the success of rock is a fairly recent development, the seeds were planted in the fifties. Alan Freed's rock and roll shows, first in the midwest and then in New York, had black and white acts on the same stage which drew enormous crowds of youngsters on both sides of the color line. The acts didn't use separate parts of the stage, any more than the audience used separate parts of the theater. Freed's audiences were generally well-behaved. Although at other shows of the fifties mayhem did break out on occasion, the minor riots were not racial in nature.

Tentatively, shyly, but actively, black and white kids in America were reaching out and learning more about each other than they had ever known before. They were learning as equals, equally absorbed in their

Anthony and the Imperials

passion for this big new music that was happening to them. There were none of the superficial barriers that had been placed between them for hundreds of years when they all sat (and rocked and swayed and clapped and danced and screamed) in the darkened theater. The alliance might have been strained and uneasy at first, but it grew easier with each exposure. The slowly changing attitudes of the music industry helped, too. Probably no group of spirited black kids would have sat still for a white version, say of Bo Diddley, but Whitey doing his own thing, as long as he was together, was okay. (The king of it all was of course Elvis Presley who learned a great deal from Bo. But Presley was the image of the era and as such could do no wrong. He even hit the R & B charts, so strong was his impact. Bo Diddley kept right on going, shrugged his shoulders at Presley, and said, "Let him. I'm not starving." Perhaps Presley's biggest hit was his version of Big Mama Thornton's immortal "Hound Dog," the world outside Soulville just wasn't ready for Big Mama yet. She was too real, too strong, and the world accepted a display of fireworks rather than brave the volcano that was the original. More about Big Mama, or Edna Mae, as she's known to strangers, later on.

And so the decade grew, the demands grew, and most of all, the beat grew. Stronger and stronger, more and more insistent, it echoed the throbbing life of the ghetto, its people, its problems. It sang of love and loneliness in a voice that earlier only darker ears had been attuned to. Now suddenly everybody was listening as old things gave way to new in a hundred different ways. From the cracks in the walls, constructed as much to keep one people in as to keep another out, could be heard a sound,a music. Black music was the weapon of the new Joshuas of mid-century America.

By some strange paradox, R & B, which had stayed the closest to home all this time, had carried the furthest. It never set out for the coffee houses of Greenwich Village, or the smart clubs of midtown. It stayed home, it stayed strong, it stayed funky, and soon the world came looking for it. Soul music was at home, it was down home, and soon it would be in *your* home, babee!

The Golden Groups

No doubt ensemble singing is as old as music itself, and in soul music, the group has come to be the primary form. The gathering together of voices in harmony or contrast is as ancient as tribal life on the mother continent. As a study in style, the changes that can be heard and observed in R & B groups provide an acute barometer of many attitudes in black life in America.

The group was a logical extension of the gospel form. The intoxicating combination of the preacher and the congregation going full blast was transformed into the lead singer and back-up voices of groups. Although groups have existed throughout every phase of the development of soul music, it was in the fifties that they really began to dominate. The Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers, for example, had done their thing, but never had the impact that the Ravens and their flocks of followers had. These earlier groups were more in the inspirational mode. They specialized in a sweetly harmonious style, and their inflections weren't especially black. They sounded "acceptable" to white ears. And at a time when nobody dared to think that Black is Beautiful, the use of a name like "Ink Spots" was more than a little deprecating. Their use of both the bass line and the falsetto seems almost comedic to our ears, and

indeed the group was a favorite target of the mimicking comics of the day.

Of course, it is very easy from the vantage point of today to look down at the efforts of such groups. We have no way of knowing how heavy were the dues they had to pay, or how hard the changes they went through. This much we do know: they suffered. Though they were heard on the radio (the chief entertainment medium for Depression-America), the networks still discriminated against soul artists. During that big D, record business was down to nothing, so there wasn't much bread to be made that way. With the war, came a shortage of shellac, then the principal ingredient in records. During the post-war period, business started to boom again, and the musicians' union placed a ban on recording, explaining it was putting live musicians out of work. Finally, by the fifties, things started looking up. The development of the long-playing album, the lower-priced single, stereophonic sound for the home, all helped the technical end of the business. The old idea of "race records" had long since died out, and a new day was finally arriving for black artists. As with any art form, the newer performers and styles built upon the older ones, discarding some elements, revitalizing others, and ultimately developing the music to a degree never achieved before. Where only a short time earlier, black groups had been a thin trickle in the fat stream of popular American music, they were now to swell to perhaps its single most important element.

Because they had to fight so much harder than their white counterparts for a share of their place in the Sun, black groups did more than stand there and sing—they "performed." In part, they had been conditioned to do this by the very demanding ghetto audiences; when an M.C. in Harlem announces, "Showtime!" that's exactly what he means. Groups dance and cavort onstage, the more energetic even do acrobatics, and the wittier ones clown and do comedy routines that are highly polished and often are small gems of comedy. (Many of the dances that have swept the country started as part of a group's onstage routine.) Groups also used movement simply to heighten the effectiveness of their numbers. This is especially true of the Motown groups, whose choreography is as stylized and polished as their musical arrangements.

In the late fifties and even into the sixties, many "stars" were produced in recording studios and didn't even know how to walk out on a stage. Motown executives, on the other hand, had always sent their acts out on the road well prepared to face live audiences and knock them out. What an effect those Motown groups had on the audiences at the big rock shows with their swinging professionalism in the midst of so much ineptness! It was great foresight in the part of these executives, considering that these same groups now play the poshest supper clubs and concert halls in the world, and have taken to lavishly produced television

The 5th Dimension

spectaculars with equal coolness and aplomb. It was no accident or coincidence that this is the label that produced that heady little number named Diana Ross.

And, these groups dressed! They used to call the clothes "threads," now that word's been changed to "vines." (Why vines? "They hang, man, they hang!" was comedian Nipsey Russell's explanation to his slightly bewildered tailor.) By any name, more of a group's loot went for uniforms than for any other single commodity. Even if down-at-the-heels and out-of-work, the group still had to look as if it was happening. And once on-stage, they had to outshine everything else in sight. In an earlier age, the zoot suit had reigned supreme, and when it was altered and adapted by the bop musicians, with sunglasses and French beret added, it set the style for the youth of the country. Actually, this get-up was the definitive version of what the slicksters in the black ghettos of the time were strutting around in. The R & B acts took the fashion of the streets a step further. They embellished a fairly conventional cut of clothes with the wildest fabrics imaginable. Dinner jackets appeared in fluorescent plaids, and gold lame was everywhere. The man who cornered the sequin market in Harlem would have had it made for life. (It is well known that Elvis Presley, in his early days in New York, hung around the Apollo and learned, baby; it is probable that Liberace checked out the dressing rooms, or at least sent *his* tailor there, too). Little Anthony and the Imperials performing on a completely darkened stage at the old Fox Theater in Brooklyn are never to be forgotten. The collars and cuffs of their shirts were made of, or treated with some glow-in-the-dark substance and as they sang, all that was visible was the movement of their luminous collars and cuffs. And this was years before light shows, day-glo, black lights, or any of the other effects that have now become the cliches of the psychedelic style.

All that stuff belonged to the guys. When the girl groups started getting to be important, they also proved themselves to be pioneers in setting fashion trends. Female groups worked in mini dresses, jumpsuits, and party pants before any of these things became fashionable.

Today, the accent for many of the top groups (Motown excepted) is on "dressing free." this means anything from the thrift shop to granny's attic: Indian gear, old army uniforms, fringes, leathers, furs, anything that works. Even to look bedraggled costs a bundle, though, and most soul groups don't get quite as loose with their uniforms as many hard-rock groups do. Many R & B performers dig the Afro look, and in this way dress as handsomely, if a lot less formally, than their predecessors.

If there is one area where today's groups have broken completely with the older style, it is in the matter of hair. It used to be the thing to get as white as possible, especially if you were an entertainer. But if Black is Beautiful, why look white? There is no major black performer today who

will go through the tortures of what is called "the process," or conking. Processed hair, baked and burnt to be as straight as possible, is completely out. Even the performers who only a few years ago appeared onstage conked to the bone or else didn't appear at all, have had to undergo a complete reversal. It is not an exageration to say that anyone who continued to process his hair would be laughed (or worse) off stage. The whole thing has become so tied into the whole identity concept that its even mentioned in a James Brown lyric. The black man-in-the-street, or John Q. Ghetto as he is also known, won't let his stars get too far away from reality. While it is true that a black performer can rise to a state of preeminence above his audience unknown to a white performer, (again, James Brown), it is equally true that that audience keeps very close watch on all aspects of the artist's life. The black audience appreciates the world-wide accolades bestowed on its stars, but it doesn't like them wandering too far from home, at least in attitude. (When Eartha Kitt failed to take a stand or to act during the period of protest, and stayed away from black audiences, she found it very hard to get back to "the people." They didn't dig her silence, so they wouldn't listen to her songs. It wasn't until her run-in at the White House with Lady Bird Johnson (remember her?) that she really got herself back into the good graces of the community.) The black man isn't trying to look, think, or be white anymore, and he doesn't want his stars to, either. Thus, even in the great transformation in the physical style of the groups, we see an example of the close parallel between soul music and soul people's history. The singers, as well as the songs, tell it like it is, was, and will be. It was one hell of a road from the Mills Brothers to Sly and the Family Stone, but at least you met some interesting people along the way. Let's get to some of them now.

Take the letter I. In soul that's a very important letter because it gives you the Impressions, the Isley Brothers, and Ike and Tina Turner and their Ikettes, all told, three of the most dynamic and long-lasting groups around. First, the Impressions. This trio has stood in the front ranks of soul for better than ten years now. Lead singer/songwriter Curtis Mayfield is recognized as one of the geniuses of the music business, both in those two roles as well as a producer, businessman (the Impressions now own their own record company, "Curtom"), and discoverer of talent. (He was instrumental in turning a talented family into the Five Stairsteps and Cubie.)

The Impressions started out as a foursome, but after they cut their first hit, original lead singer Jerry Butler decided to go out on his own. Curtis filled in as lead, Samuel Gooden continued as bass, and Fred Cash continued as tenor. The three piled up hit after hit, and have become one of the mainstays of soul. They have turned more and more to meaningful music, starting as far back as 1964 with "Keep on Pushing,"

and, more recently, in major efforts like the album "This Is My Country"; they have made important statements with their "we're a winner" motto and attitude. The Impressions celebrate the qualities of soul in a most effective way.

The music that the Isley Brothers lay out falls in a different category. Their message is intimate and immediate. "Do Your Thing" was not only an immensely popular tune, it became a call to arms to a whole generation of kids. But that kind of effect is nothing new for these three real-life brothers, Kelly, Ronnie, and Rudolph. In 1962, everybody was doing the twist, and even though Chubby Checker's disc "The Twist" was far and away the biggest seller, it was the Isley's "Twist and Shout" that became the classic; it is the only tune connected with the now-dead dance that is still being done. The Brothers went through all the important musical changes of the sixties, and achieved their own unique sound, as well as ownership of their own record label, which they feel gives them the freedom to do whatever they want. As veterans of the record industry, they know very well that control rests with whoever is dealing out the dollars, and they've had enough of that shuffle. "Do Your Thing" was the first output of their company, and it was Brother produced, written, arranged, and sung. It was a long lesson, but well learned, and now they're ready to produce other acts besides themselves.

As this is being written, the hottest soul act in the country is Ike and Tina Turner; this, after they spent fifteen years of gigging, recording, concerts, clubs, and even a dynamite movie appearance. The world is ready for this most soulful of onslaughts. There is almost no other polite word for what Tina Turner does to an audience. She is sex personified, full womanhood, no mean little games-playing girl. She is in turn aggressive and suggestive and she sings as if she's coming all over herself. (Which makes for instant identification with the audience, if you get the picture.) She makes love to Ike, to the mike, and to you, if you like. She goes through every gyration known to man, and a few known only to woman. As the old song said, she's come a long way from St. Louis (where she first met Ike), and she's picked up on a lot of useful info on the way. Only that unbeatable beat is still there to remind you that this was once Annie Mae Bullock who sang in the church choir in ol' Knoxville, Tennessee.

But all this action up front isn't all, there is also Ike, guitaring it to a fare-thee-well behind his bumping bride, and the three Ikettes, providing the wildest, wisest, back-up of any girl group in the world, and certainly adding a lot to the pervasive sexuality that is rampant all over the busy stage. Backing them all are the Kings of Rhythm, a group of with the same name as the original band that Ike formed in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Not only does Ike direct the whole Revue, he writes and arranges much of their material. Dynamic Tina co-produces their recording ses-

sions. The whole package is as tight and tough as anything that exists in R & B. yet it took them fifteen long, arduous, knock-about years. counting from the time that Ike and Tina teamed up, to achieve the recognition they deserve. Ike had been very active musically with the Kings long before then. They are on more record labels than most acts have records; that's the kind of knocking about they had to do. In fact, their best recording, "River Deep, Mountain High," was a number one seller in England years ago, and was only released here very recently. If a white group with ten percent of the Turner talent, vitality, and excitement was ever to appear, they would be scooped up overnight as the super-group of the century. Yet, here is the real thing, and it took fifteen years for it to happen for them, and fifteen years is a lot longer than the professional life span of most popular entertainers. It must have "took a whole lotta soul" to keep them together for all that time; and that "whole lotta of soul" hits you with every record or personal appearance they make. On an album, Tina is sex goddess and earth mother at the same time. She will sing straight blues, sock-it-to-me sagas, and genuine gospel on the same side. I've never heard her hit all those stops at an in-person performance; her sweet gospel side probably would bring down her audience after all the sex stuff, and the Turners are too stage shrewd to commit that kind of blunder. Of course records can only bring you the audio effects of their performance, which really has to be seen to be savored, but fortunately the albums are good as far as choice of material is concerned. Obviously, from the (track) record, this is a group with a lot of staying power, so now that they have arrived, they should be on the scene for a long time. Their "Bold Soul Sister" hit is perfect material, as well as a neat description of Tina. A toast to the Turners: keep on "keepin' on," and turning us on forever.

Another kind of family togetherness is the aforementioned Five Stairsteps and Cubie, probably the best children's act to ever big-beat it to the top. Even though the five brothers and sister who comprise the act do rather sophisticated material, they are such seasoned performers that there is nothing bad-taste or novelty tinged about them as there has so often been around child stars. Rather they remind one of the gospel Staple Singers, with a few years headstart on their careers. The kids are very ably managed by their daddy, Clarence Burke Sr., who plays bass guitar and supervises the band, and mama Burke, who supervises everything else. These charming people, who believe very strongly in their youngsters, are a far cry from the usual run of stage parents.

What brings the Stairsteps their beautiful strength is that, cute as they undeniably are, they don't depend on that cuteness to get across. They are professional entertainers in the best sense of the word, and the standards they meet are those of adults, not children. Thus, they can be judged on adult standards, with no allowances made for age. The Stair-

The Friends
Of Distinction

steps are Alohe, 19, and her brothers Clarence Jr., 18, James, 17, Dennis, 16, Kenneth, 15, and Cubie, 5. A beautiful entertainment packaging job by the senior Burkes.

Also on the sweet side of soul are the duo known as Peaches and Herb who like to bill themselves as the "Sweethearts of Soul." Herb Fame and Marlene Mack are upholders of an old R & B traditiion. The male-female duo has always been especially popular with soul audiences; Butterbeans and Susie worked the vaudeville circuits before World War I and for many years after it. Mickey and Sylvia were consistent hit-makers during the fifties. Dinah Washington and Brook Benton, Carla Thomas and Otis Redding, Betty Everett and Jerry Butler were all doing well as singles, but teamed up for a time to produce some dynamite sides, as did Marvin Gaye with a string of different partners. Part of the fun of the man-woman combination is that it allows for give-and-take between the performers that audiences dig. Peaches and Herb engage in a little light chatter between verses of their tunes that really round out their thing. As mentioned elsewhere, the black audience is a very demanding one, and anything extra that a performer adds helps to keep his act on top. With some, it may be the extra dosage of energy or excitement; with a Peaches and Herb kind of format, there is that playfulness that gets across so well. It can turn a single into a little act. The ultimate, of course, in man-woman onstage foreplay is exhibited by Ike and Tina Turner, but theirs is an entirely different message. P and H are the sweethearts of soul, remember, and the accent is very much on the sweetness. There are so many different levels and facets to soul, and every artist expressing one of those layers of meaning is adding to the definition of soul-art. And it is their doing, rather than in words, that the meaning of soul is to be found.

There is even an aspect of group soul that has found its way straight into mainstream music. Foremost among the "made-its" in this area are the Fifth Dimension, who swung a ballad called "Up, Up, and Away" till it was clear out of sight. This is an extremely well put together group, with cheerful good looks, lush "vines," slickery routines, and groovy tunes. You just know the 5th didn't grow out of a neighborhood church choir or high school chorus, and they don't try to come on as if they did. Critics who are so swift to point out how "white" the group sounds should take note of the fact that in their genesis, as the Hi-Fi's, they toured with the Ray Charles Revue, and you can't get much more soulful than that. Subsequent hits, such as "Stoned Soul Picnic," "Working On a Groovy Thing," and "Wedding Bell Blues," have put them deeper into the ol' soul bag. What the 5th Dimension demonstrates so well is that music doesn't have to have labels and limits. The 5th Dimension has a heavily California rather than a delta beat to its soul, but it's soul nonetheless. And here's the clincher—they dress too hip to be white.

Hard on the heels of the 5th Dimension is a lively foursome known as the Friends of Distinction. They too hail from southern California, and specialize in easy-to-take soul. For their first hit they took Hugh Masekela's "Grazing in the Grass," added lyrics by Friend Harry Elston, and made a lot of people humming-happy. There is another echo of the 5th Dimension here: Harry and the group's other male member, Floyd Butler, met while both were members of another traveling Ray Charles contingent. (Can the Genius pick talent?)

Floyd started out wanting to play jazz saxophone, but got turned on to singing by a relative who was with an R & B groups in the heyday of such groups in the fifties. The youngest Friend, Jessica Cleaves, like Harry, started singing in her church choir at the usual early age, and always wanted a show biz career. Both she and the other girl-Friend, Barbara Jean Love, are native Californians. Barbara pretty much grew up in the business, since her father is a local disc jockey. The Friends of Distinction have a sound that is highly distinctive and very much their own. It is looser and freer than the 5th D., and so is their appearance. There is more informality to their whole scene, and they come on with a young, fresh, happy, sound that should keep them right on top. They too have a "hey-don't-label-us" quality about them that blurs musical boundaries; they can compete in the soul market as well as in the pop/white market.

Soul music defies segregation as naturally as soul people do. Some soul groups are instant integration. Take the Chambers Brothers, who really are brothers, and come from Mississippi, except for the drummer, whose name is Brian Keenan, and who comes from the Bronx. The Chambers were born to the soil; Brian was born to the streets where he would spend hours fascinated by the Puerto Rican bongo players who congregated on the street corners of his neighborhood. The Brothers broke out of the delta stranglehold and made it to the west coast; Brian split for England when still in his teens. They all converged in New York some years later. As George, the oldest member of the group tells it, "We were all so busy playing different instruments when we sang, there was no one to hand-clap. We needed a drummer bad!" They heard Brian at a then-swinging discotheque and decided he was their man. Thus, the most solidly country-gospel-blues-rock group in the business has an urban white drummer laying out the beat, and nothing could seem more natural. When the five first started gigging around New York, they all wore business suits and button-down shirts and neat close-cropped hair; they were serious about their sound and they looked it. As things started to move for them, they loosened up, and so did their music. Their sound became bigger and happier, and the country-boy-in-the-big-city uptightness fled like a kid caught stealing in a candy store. The Chambers were chart artists, and that accomplishments removed any uncertainties that might have been hibernating inside them since the delta days. Now they

let their hair grow (into some of the most natural naturals this side of Jimi Hendrix), and replaced the uniforms with some of the wildest outfits the other side of Jimi Hendrix. They have also begun to look into themselves for more and more of their material, in itself a sign of the increasingly maturing artist. In this regard, high marks go to Brother Julius who is writing and arranging for the group. To all of the Chambers Brothers, including the adopted one, must go credit for having sought that elusive thing called freedom, and once having found it, making the very most precious use of it, applying it to their music, their soul, and their lives. To them this freedom has not meant a disregard of discipline or disobeying of rules, but an opportunity to give voice to the inner feeling that in all too many people is smothered. The result has been a hip, happy, and giving sound, that has brought them a large and responsive audience. Up from the delta yes, but with huge echoes of Africa and the never-far-off gospel message that Willie, George, Lester, Joe, and yes, Brian not only play but live by.

With a hole, the more that you dig out, the bigger it gets. With soul, the more that you spread around, the more you get. With Dyke and the Blazers, a tune the leader wrote called "We Got More Soul" gave credit to a lot of other soul singers, like Ray Charles, James Brown, Johnnie Taylor. Dyke spread it all around and it strengthened his own sound. And that sound of his had been growing for a long time. His father was a bandleader and by the time Dyke was seventeen, he was already touring with a band as bass player. He also worked with a group that backed up the O'Jays. In 1964 he formed his own group, and the original Blazers are still blazing behind him. They were a local group, playing around Phoenix, Arizona. Dyke had put together a tune and then developed a dance that went with it. He got so many requests for it, that he finally pressed 100 records to sell at the dances he played. All one hundred went the first night, and he figured he was onto something. Was he? Well, it was called "Funky Broadway," so y'all can finish the story yourself. Dyke (or Alester Christian, if you call him by his right name, which he writes under), has also written "Let a Woman Be a Woman—let a Man Be a Man" and other goodies that other artists have grabbed. Who would have thought there'd be that much soul in Goldwater country? It just goes to show that soul has a way of being where you'd least expect it, and that there's really enough to go 'round if we all just do a little something to spread it around.

Surprisingly, since nothing spreads soul so fast and fine as some sister really pouring it out, there have been very few girl groups who have made it. (The obvious exceptions are the Motowners, discussed in another chapter.) Many have appeared, had a hit or two, and then vanished. The biggest, bestest one was the Shirelles, who had a whole string of smashers in the early sixties. They were described by promoters as the only female

Isley Bros.

group of the time who could sell out a good-sized theater or concert hall. Some of their tunes have become classics, cut by many other artists, but few with that original punch that Shirley and her girls gave it. (They're forever immortalized in the funniest scene in "Hair," where a black girl would-be Abe Lincoln starts reciting the Gettysburg Address, getting as far as "dedicated..." when a shrill chorus of would-be Shirelles chimes in "to the one I love," in a perfect take-off of their biggest hit.) Although they are only girls, the Shirelles as much as any group set the tone and pace of those dear dead days. Every once in a while, up would pop a little three-or-foursome, like the Chantels, Chiffons, Orlons, and Angels, sing their little hearts out, do their dances, and "poof," fragile as their names, waft back home (usually South Philadelphia) and be gone. The Shirelles themselves, happy to report, have regrouped and are currently livening things up at Rock and Roll revival Shows, doing their old thing with as much pow as anybody else is doing their new thing. They haven't gotten back to busting up the charts yet, but who knows...

One girl group that did come up from the back of the recording studio with fairly good results are the Sweet Inspirations, originally, Aretha Franklin's back-up voices. Still searching for a really big hit, they have made the charts pretty consistently, and always with good material. Their voices, gospel pure and strong, are really excellent and it's probably just a question of the right tune at the right time. This is no fluke one-hit group, but a high-powered, high-standard quartet that will keep on getting better. And when they do hit heavily, it's gonna be earth-shattering because the talent is there.

Girls have done all right as lead singers with male back-up, as in the cases of Ruby and the Romantics, and Brenda and the Tabulations. The old earth-mother image of a society inclined towards matriarchy would tend to support such a combination, although a good beat and the right material are probably a big help.

Before we kiss the girls goodbye altogether, it should be noted that in days to come we may hear big things from such comparative babes-in-arms as the Honey Cone or the Three Degrees or Honey and the Bees. Here's hoping that female groups can break out of the apparent limitations that seem to have been imposed on them, and start hitting the charts with something like the regularity of their male counterparts. Male groups like the Dells, the Intruders, the Delphonics, the Meters, the Winstons, and the Chi-lites may not hit with the frequency of the Four Tops or the Temptations, but they are up there often enough and with enough power to keep the fans familiar with their music. Groups like these are the backbone of soul, not only on record but in the personal appearances, when the kids can get to see them. Theirs is the music being sung and danced, and theirs too the style that most soul kids respond to and identify with. They are the proof that the ghetto walls aren't im-

penetrable, because most of them come straight out of the same environment as their adoring audiences. Talent and a lot of dues paying make the difference. It's a success that isn't too far out of the reach of those kids for whom a lot of other doors are still shut tight. But hell, ask any black teenager if he'd rather be president of the United States or James Brown. Who was greater, John Foster Dulles, or Sam Cooke? (Who even remembers John Foster Dulles? These kids not only have sense, they have taste.) In fact, there are groups making it who haven't even left the ghetto, but carry it with them, with *pride*. Like the Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band, the Voices of East Harlem, the 125th Street Candy Store. (I think I know which candy store they mean. It's near St. Nicholas Avenue and they still make their own ice cream, like Hawaiian Moon, rum raisin, and pineapple-orange, and they serve peanut-butter and banana sandwiches. Peanut-butter and banana sandwiches? Yes.) Getting back to the music, these are big, good-sounding groups whose very names let you know right off where they're at. This is black pride, uh huh, a strong, freaky streak of it that is compelling in its directness. Somebody I know says you have to love them for it, and I guess you do. It comes across in their sound, and over it all wave those names like banners. We've come a long way, when we can call ourselves by our rightful names and be 103rd Street and not the Hollywoods.

Rightful names too, as strong and straight-on, are the duos of Sam and Dave, and Mel and Tim. The former have been on the R & B scene for a while, and right on top of it too, and M. and T. hit clear out of the blue, with a number-one scoring the first time out, and possibly the speediest follow-up hit on record, just to let the people know right off that they weren't just jiving. Getting back to the senior pair, the pride of Memphis, the famed "Soul Man" singers, they are Sam Moore and Dave Prater. After working solo, they teamed up in the early sixties and gigged in the Miami area. Their first big break came in 1965, "You Don't Know Like I Know," earning them most promising duo awards all over the place. They rewarded this foresight on the part of the award givers by quickly recording "Hold On I'm Coming." End of "promise" —arrival. Onstage, they are the tightest, fastest, hottest twosome in the business. Offstage, they don't talk to each other. Go figure it. The Gilbert and Sullivan of soul. Anyway, it doesn't show, either in the smoothness of their records, or the fantastic teamwork of their personal appearances. They are without doubt one of the best in-person act of the day.

Of Mel and Tim, this much is known: an unknown act, on an unheard of label, they were lucky enough to have been picked up by Florence Greenberg of Scepter who distributed and promoted the disc as only she can. The two sweet-voiced youngsters did a very cute ditty called "Backfield in Motion" that coupled a wittly lyric with a high, clear soul-sound

that leaped to the top. Within a week after it started its downward trek, Mrs. G. had the boys back with another devilment, "Good Guys Only Win in Movies," which took less than a month to break into the top fifteen. This is the kind of handling that gives talent stardom. It would have been easy enough to lay with the one big smash for a while, but to back it up instantly with another smash makes an indelible mark on the public consciousness that places the team in the star category automatically, never having to work out of the one-hit class where so many promising careers have flunked. (They should have titled the second song "Instant Replay.") Mel and Tim, majoring in soul, will graduate with honors.

Another group that banged right back was the Brooklyn-based group called Kool and the Gang. Their first tune also had that name and the "numero dos" simply announced "The Gang's Back," and they surely were. This kind of cool, no matter how you spell it, is exactly the kind that gets over every time. A band of bright and happy instruments doing it.

One of the most important sounds in soul is that of King Curtis and the band he calls his King Pins. Curtis is the most eminent saxophone in all of R & B, and has probably been heard on more hit records than anyone else in the business. He backs Aretha, and many of the top jazz artists. As a youngster in Ft. Worth, Texas, his great influence was the legendary Lester Young, "Prez." Billie Holiday tagged him, the greatest sax man till Charlie Parker. Curtis learned his way into every area of soul music, from straight blues to jazz to funky R & B. Such is his musicianship that, in this age of minutest specialization, he is called on to play in all these areas of music. In addition to embellishing everybody elses gigs, he is a star in his own right, having had chart stuff going back to the time of the twist (a rendition of "Soul Serenade" that is among the very best), and a special affinity for the Memphis approach to this music thing that makes his reworkings of the Stax catalog a real joy. King Curtis plays, sings, writes, arranges. He is soul on wax.

To mention all the outstanding groups in soul music (Tymes, Tams) would be like publishing a seed catalog, (Patti La Belle and the Bluebelles) or a telephone directory. Lots of good names (Archie Bell and the Drells, Malibus, Moments, Funkedelics, O'Jays, Chi-Lites, Chairmen of the Board); lots of groovy numbers (Reparata and the Delrons). The best of groups (Vibrations!) fall on hard times, split up, regroup, or just keep on going, behind past performances. Hot turns cold. New ones keep happening. (Whatnauts, Village Soul Choir). This is at once the strength and weakness of the scene; it demands new talent sometimes without having properly rewarded the talent at hand, which it thrusts away (Soul Survivors, Jay and the Techniques). Yet this constantly changing milieu is a challenge that does not allow anyone to stay on top by standing still.

The Impressions

To trace the changes that the soul groups embody is to provide an index to the changes in black life itself. From the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots to the Impressions, black has been banned, has been barely, has been brimming and bursting, and finally beautiful. . .but always *best.*

Tales of Two Cities: Memphis and Motown

The country cousin and the city cousin. The passion and the polish. The two sides of soul. Memphis and Motown (that's Detroit to plain people) are two of the most important recording centers in the country. Each has come to symbolize a sound that has become synonymous with it. The successes of each have been staggering; artists have gravitated to both locations, trying to capture the sound and possibly some of the magic. The Motown scene is completely dominated by the group of labels owned by the "Motown" record company; these include Motown itself, Gordy, Tamla, and Soul. Memphis is home to other soul companies, notably Hi Records, but has won most of its recent attention because of its Stax group, including Volt and Enterprise. Motown has come to stand for the more urbanized, lighter, tighter, R & B; Memphis for the harder, stronger, closer-to-the-blues driving rhythm that comes to it straight from the delta lands which lie due south. Both sounds are gospel-oriented, since almost all of the artists associated with Motown and Stax come out of the church. Motown is black-owned, and, although Stax isn't, it is very much black-dominated in its executive, writing, and producing staffs, as well as in its roster of artists.

From the time of W.C. Handy, the Father of the Blues, Memphis has

always been known as a music town. So much so that there was even a group of bluesmen who called themselves West Memphis men to distinguish their style from that of the rest of the town. This group included Muddy Waters and other greats. Later, being right at the spot where R & B crosses country and western, Memphis became an important breeding ground for that hybrid of both forms known as rock and roll. Still later, it was immortalized as the title of a Chuck Berry tune. It's traditions as a music-making center outdate those of Detroit as a car-making center, but the Motown phenom predates what is now called the Memphis sound, so we should examine it first.

A record company, no matter how well organized and shrewdly managed is only as good as its artists, and there is no company in any phase of the music business that carries as much glitter as Motown. It discovered not only a sophisticated but simple musical formula, but a roster that includes Diana Ross, the Four Tops, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, The Supremes, the Temptations, the Marvelettes, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, the Originals, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Tammi Terrell, Edwin Starr, Junior Walker and the All-Stars, Brenda Holloway, the Jackson Five, Chuck Jackson, and the group of groups, Smokey (Robinson) and the Miracles. Also such distinguished graduates as the misses Mary Wells and Kim Weston. Yet for all the glitter and the glamor, if any big organization can be said to be a family, this is it.

Almost every other act at Motown was brought to the company by a member of the "family." This makes for strong ties. Stevie Wonder was discovered by Ronnie White, one of the Miracles. The Supremes were discovered by the Temptations. Diana Ross discovered the Jackson Five. Most of the others were finds of the Motown founder, Berry Gordy. There are even marriages between groups Miracle Bobby Rogers is married to Wanda Rogers of the Marvelettes.

In the polished perfection that is the trademark of Motown acts, there is a resemblance that smacks of family, too. The choreography of each act is as carefully arranged as its music, and is as meticulously executed. Yet there is no air of the mechanical about a Motown appearance, nothing that would put you in mind of, say the machine-like contrivances of the Radio City Music Hall mile-long chorus line that kicks and struts in mindless unison. Rather, it is like controlled fire, a directed flow instead of a roaring blaze. It is graceful and nice to watch. The secret seems to be that the Motownies don't just look as if they know what they're doing, they look like they love what they're doing. This gives each one of the acts an overall warmth that takes the chill off what might otherwise be cold professionalism. They also respect their audiences, and the investments that Berry Gordy made in choreography and costuming before he sent an act out on the road was money very well spent. In the early day they were playing to kid audiences, but they were dressed to

Diana Ross

play the Copa. (When, years later they did play the Copa, they were ready. No Motown act has ever bombed in a top nightspot; this is quite a record in itself.) Other girl groups looked as if they were outfitted at some local store, but an act like Martha and the Vandellas looked as though they had stepped out of the pages of Vogue (even though no black faces ever peeped out of Vogue in those old days). But they had the look, and the hungry young ghetto audiences loved it. After all, how many people had ever taken the trouble to get themselves so together for those kids? It was a salute and a tribute, and it didn't get lost on those kids (or Gordy either, I'm sure). The Motown contingents came on like they were doing command performances for the crowned heads of Europe. And if they looked irresistable, they sounded even more so. Who could sit still when "Mickey's Monkey" was done to a turn by the Miracles, or the then "Little" Stevie Wonder was snapping his "Fingertips"? No matter who headlined the bill, the second favorite of the audience, if not the out-and-out preference, would be one of the Motown acts.

It is too damn easy to give all the credit to the smart management for which the company is justly famous (and frequently blasted). Costumes and choreography aside, the performers were as talented as anyone to appear on the pop music scene. When Smokey Robinson, the dancingest vice-president in the annals of American industry, led the Miracles in the monkey, he brought the house down. They didn't just jump all over the stage, as some groups did; they danced as well as they could sing. Even standing still during slow numbers, their gestures were perfect. Motown acts have an innate understanding of what they are, and what they are doing. That quality plus talent equals stardom, folks. Anything else is just going through the motions. You cannot bribe an audience. Not with lights, staging, costumes, or any theatrics. Those kids sitting out there for three and four shows knew they were getting something better than they ever saw on TV or in the movies. When the shows finished their runs, the kids bought the records. Singers and labels came and went, the British invasion flooded the record market, and Motown just kept getting stronger.

By the time the Supremes came along in 1964, the label had already launched such stellar artists as Marvin Gaye, Mary Wells, the Temptations, and the Four Tops. But the trio of Diana Ross, Mary Wilson, and Florence Ballard (later replaced by Cindy Birdsong) proved to be the crowning touch. Still in their teens, they completely took-over the charts from their first big hit, "Baby Love," and never stopped. A Supremes release was as sure as money in the bank, be it R & B or pop. Everyone bought the Supremes, and suddenly, it was realized that the girls had snapped not only the color line, but the age line as well. Teenagers themselves, supposedly with an appeal limited to that audience, they were

Steve Wonder

soon booking (and filling) the biggest and best rooms in the country and the world. Rooms that don't go for kid prices. White kids had been apeing the buying tastes of black kids for a while, and now the adult white world was doing it too. The Supremes had earned their title; they became the number one female attraction in the world. Television opened up to them, not only for guest shots, but for two excellent specials they did with the Temptations. It was apparent that the Supremes were sparked by lead singer Diana Ross, and when she began to get billing over the other two, it was equally apparent that there was something in the works. As they became known as Diana Ross and the Supremes, public familiarity with her name was achieved while identity with the best-selling group was retained. On their second television special, the spotlight was dominated by a singing, dancing, acting, clowning Diana who thoroughly captivated the viewers. Within weeks came the announcement that she was leaving the group to strike out on her own. Well, not exactly on her own; the firm hand of Motown management was to operate just as it had in the past, producing her records and guiding her into other areas like theater and films. It was at this point that Jean Terrell was brought in and groomed as the replacement. Diana hasn't made her first solo move, but the threesome has just had its first single released. It's different, it's great, and it's happened already—instant hit!

Meanwhile, back at the studio, all goes well. Especially with the Temptations, or as their fans like to call them, the Temps. Of all the groups, they have gone furthest from the Motown mold, primarily in their material. They are tackling contemporary themes in a much more direct and political way than any of the others. They scored heavily with "Runaway Child," and "Cloud Nine," and one of the most important album cuts they have ever made, "Message From a Black Man," became a hit for two other groups. The quintet, Melvin Franklin, Paul Williams, Otis Williams, Eddie Kendricks, and Dennis Edwards (who replaced David Ruffin), have come a long way from the almost simplistic lyric and matching beat of their early days. The growth in material has been matched by a growth in popularity; they soar in and out of the top ten with almost mystic ease.

During 1969 the Temps outstripped the Four Tops then considered Motown's top male group. The Tops, secure in their niche had stayed in their one bag; suddenly, that wasn't enough for a black act. They got the message, and their initial album of the seventies, "Soul Spin" was loaded with social significance and strong new songs. They were just another group of pushin' and scratchin' little orphans of the show biz world when Mother Motown took them under her wing. They became perfect, and their showmanship electrified audiences. Perhaps their perfect song was "Reach Out (I'll Be There)," sung with such stunning conviction that it

The Supremes

The Temptations

stops every performance cold. Happily, for those who admire the group so much, they have expanded their scope with songs like "Look Out Your Window," "Barbara's Boy" and "Lost in a Pool of Red"; at the same time, with "Nothing" (written for them by Smokey Robinson), they prove that they can still belt out the love stuff better than anybody else in the world. The group, with members Levi Stubbs, Jr., Renaldo "Obie" Benson, Lawrence Payton, and Abdul "Duke" Fakir has remained intact since 1954. It joined Motown in 1962 and has been spinning ever since.

Perhaps the most dynamic member of the family is William Robinson, also identifiable as lead singer of Smokey and the Miracles. In addition to his onstage abilities, he is a powerful composer, arranger, and producer. He has done wonderful songs, like "Tracks of My Tears" and "I Second That Emotion." He, Ron White, Bobby Rogers, Pete Moore, and guitarist Marv Tarplin, have been doing their thing together since they were about fourteen. They recorded with Berry Gordy before there was a Motown, and they're one of the biggest reasons there is a Motown now. They were the first act signed by the label and a Smokey-Berry collaboration gave the label its first hit. This hit was the Miracles' "Shop Around," and people are still doing it.

Smokey is probably as instrumental as any other person in setting the Motown style. He has been there from the beginning and is active in every phase of producing Motown artists. (His wife Claudette has a great voice and still records with the group but no longer travels with them as she did in the early days, when she too was a beautifully turned out Motown girl who delighted audiences with her looks and singing. She prefers staying home since the Robinsons started producing their own little miracles.)

Smokey is a consummate perfectionist, and perfection forms an important part of the Motown image. Marvin Gaye, one of the key artists he sometimes produces has been dubbed "Mr. Perfectionist." While the other Motown men work in groups, Marvin was singled out by Gordy and groomed for a romantic male lead. Sometimes he is paired with a lady, like Mary Wells, Kim Weston, or Tammi Terrell. (A sad note: the young and lovely Tammi died in the winter of 1970 after a tragic illness.) Alone or with a leading lady, he is a very consistent hit-maker and a developing, maturing talent, restless in his search for new material. His is a really good voice, considered by many the top male soul singer.

One of the few girl groups to stay on top is Martha Reeves and the Vandellas. Martha is a very determined chick who started with Motown as a secretary. Every time the boss passed her desk, she'd start singing, until he finally gave in and auditioned her and the two friends who sang with her. One of the original V's has been replaced by Martha's kid sister Loise, who with Rosalind Ashford rounds out the trio. They hit earli-

Sam and Dave

er than the Supremes, but not with as much of an impact. Always a good-looking, well-dressed, sizzling stage act, they won lots of friends for Motown. From the way their records still sell, they haven't lost any of their fans.

The greatest Wonder of the Motown story is of course Stevie, who had his first hit as a youngster of twelve, singing and playing his harmonica in "Fingertips." They dubbed him the 12-year-old genius, drawing the parallel that exists between him and Ray Charles: the blindness, the brilliant musicality of the self-taught. I remember him at twelve or so years, backstage at the unbelievable old Fox theater in Brooklyn, sharing a dressing room with Ben E. King. Both had just had number one hits, and were headlining the show. The dressing room was dingy, cramped, and ugly, yet there was more electricity in the air than the stingy management had ever provided. Motown had sent a whole contingent of acts in addition to Stevie, and they were stealing the show from all of the older, more established acts on the bill. They had come to New York, and they were killing the people. The twelve-year-old star was having the time of his life. He had always wanted to sing, was glad to be able to work at it, and confessed he had never expected to have a real big hit like "Fingertips." But he had made it, and felt the vibrations from the audience as they sat there bobbing like apples in a pan of water, in time to his music. It was solid soulpower, and it has never stopped generating in him.

Stevie had hits after that, but I think the turning point was "Blowing in the Wind." He sang it at a concert that was a complete bomb, except for him. Outdoors, in an enormous baseball field, horrible acoustics, cold and rainy. By the end of the first half, everyone, including the promoters, had wished they'd stayed home. Towards the end of the second half, Stevie Wonder came out and sang "Blowing in the Wind," as if that song had never been sung before. Suddenly, he wasn't "Little" Stevie anymore. He came out of the child entertainer, novelty category, and brought the crowd to its feet. He had reached for something and had caught it, and there was no longer a boy Wonder, but a man. Since then he has grown physically and artistically. He turns songs like "Ma Cherie Amour," and "I Was Made To Love Her," into classics. When he plays New York, he fills Philharmonic Hall to capacity.

While the Motown label leans for the most part on the stars mentioned above, the company doesn't ever rest on its laurels. They are constantly finding new artists to keep up their self-proclaimed title of "The Sound of Young America." It often happens that the new act hits with as much power as the established ones. Such was the case with the Jackson Five, five brothers aged 8 to 16. Michael, Marlon, Jermaine, Toriano, and Jackie have been singing professionally for about two years. Their first release, "I Want You Back" went right to the top of the charts and the brothers went right on to Sunday-night television. Not on-

Peaches and Herb

ly do they have countless years in front of them, they have a six-year-old waiting to join them, and two sisters "on call." The amount of soul spilling out of these kids is incredible, especially considering their ages. However, a backward glance at Stevie Wonder and a look around at the kids dancing on any ghetto corner would make it understandable. There is such an untapped wealth of talent in this land, if only we would let it live. Luck, and a close-knit family made the difference for these Jackson Five. Many others won't have the opportunity to develop their talents.

In almost any discussion of the Motown operation, there is a tendency to compare the company to the giant assembly lines for which Detroit has always been famous. People like to point to the fact that Berry Gordy once worked on just such an assembly line for Ford. What is overlooked is the fact that Gordy was well-known and highly regarded around the New York recording studios when Motown was still just a private dream of his. As a songwriter, he turned out dozens of hits prior to forming his labels, and he paid his dues and learned his craft as a record producer before starting Motown. He hand picks and polishes his many talented artists and does not make them into carbon copies of each other. He is still doing business at the same address in the heart of Detroit's ghetto where he started. Anyone who thinks that in the smoothness of his operation he has lost touch with the "masses," should be made aware of the fact that when the "masses" were burning down Detroit, the Motown buildings were left untouched. Since early in the sixties Motown has been a dominant factor in R & B, a situation unlikely to change any time soon. Soul can be sweet, can be smooth, can be successful. As long as the people still dig it, it's soul.

Of course, they do it differently in Memphis. They don't nurse it, rehearse it, and wait for television to reimburse it, they mostly let it all hang out in a funny, funky, studio. The Memphis sound is harder to set down because there is less of a formula to it. However, there are some very major ingredients in what King Curtis calls the "Memphis Soul Stew." There are Booker T. (Jones) and the M.G.'s (meaning Memphis Group), composed of Steve Cropper, Donald (Duck) Dunn, Al Jackson, Jr., Their instruments are organ, guitar, bass, and drums, respectively. Their's is the most highly regarded back-up group in the business, having been on 90 percent of the recordings made by Otis Redding, Sam and Dave, Johnnie Taylor, Carla Thomas, Eddie Floyd, to mention some of the major Stax artists and Memphis taste-makers. Each member of the quartet is a composer and producer as well. For instance, in the last year or so they've done the following: Booker T. wrote the score for the film "Uptight," the youngest composer ever to be given that responsibility; Steve produced albums by various pop performers, like funky-sounding Mitch Ryder; Duck produced gospel-sounding Delaney and

The Chambers Brothers

Bonnie; Al produced the very authentic blues artist, Albert King. All of this activity has tended to push their efforts as Booker T. and the M.G.'s recording-group into the background. This is kind of unusual for a group that had a million-seller instrumental with its first release. But this is the way they wanted it, at least up until very recently, which they let their house chores at Stax be taken over by the re-formed Barkays. and the M.G.'s embarked on a European tour. (The original members of the Barkays were killed with Otis.)

This determined way of doing things is very much in the life-style of Booker T. Jones. He does everything with total concentration. For example, even though from an early age he saw himself as a musician, nevertheless, he went to college and graduated with honors from the University of Indiana. (This leader of the funkier approach to soul is one of the few major R & B artists to come out of the middle class.) Startling to many listeners is the fact that while Booker and Al are black, the other two members of the group aren't. Equally amazing is the fact that one of the nonblacks, from his work with the M.G.'s, was best known as producer, co-writer, confidant, and close companion of Otis Redding, forever undisputed king of the Memphis soul sound, and one of the immortals of black music. This group is so tight they make it impossible to draw a color line around soul.

Among the artists Booker T. and the M.G.'s back up are, Otis Redding, who recorded much of his work on Stax and Volt, Carla Thomas and her father Rufus, Eddie Floyd, Isaac Hayes, David Porter, William Bell, and Johnnie Taylor. At one time Sam and Dave headquartered in Memphis and are still associated with the sound. Then, there are all of those who fly down to Memphis for the purpose of recording within that musical context: Wilson Pickett, The Staples, etc. Many of Aretha's rhythm tracks are done there. Then, there is the rest of the pop world, coming to use other facilities in hopes of capturing some of the sound of which Stax is the leading, although not the exclusive producer. Even Elvis Presley, who started in Memphis, came back recently after a fifteen-year absence.

Aside from the top-notch work of Booker's rhythm section, Stax includes some horn players whose power and drive are vital to the overall sound. Though not as well known as the foursome, their contribution is too dynamic to be overlooked. It is in great measure because of the work of Wayne Jackson and Andrew Love that brass has once again resumed a place of prime importance in soul music, and consequently in the rest of rock.

Memphis has always been a hotbed of the blues. They are deeper into the blues there than in any other important recording center in the world. That's why an Albert King, along with his "maybe" half-brother B.B., records there. The idol of the young musicians who work with him, he is

Carla Thomas

Isaac Hayes

a constant source of inspiration to them; the feeling that he gives them is in turn passed on to the other singers whom they back. This provides a continuum of the blues that strengthens and enriches R & B, keeps it close to its roots and, at the same time, enables it to spread itself in many directions.

Jim Stewart, an ex-country fiddler with the urge to go into the recording business started Stax. He took over an old movie theater, right in the heart of the Memphis ghetto, and it soon became a hang-out for the neighborhood kids. Now, in most businesses, that would constitute an automatic nuisance, but when the kids are named Booker T. Jones, Steve Cropper, etc., and the business is music, then it's something else again. Stewart let them do some back-up work, and after one session, he dug the sounds they made and decided to record it. It turned out to be "Green Onions," a million-selling record. Booker was sixteen at that time, so to call them kids is no lie. They continued to record, go to school, and come up with thousands of musical ideas. They really put Memphis back on the musical map, and the rush was on. The Stax roster of artists became world famous as the "Stax-Volt Revue" and went on the road. Two of the albums that highlighted the sound and stars were recorded live in London and Paris. While the line-up is not as extensive as that of the larger lables, each of the performers is a powerhouse, and most are multi-talented. They write, produce, arrange, and of course, perform. The onstage appearance of the Memphisites is easier to experience than to analyze. The interplay that characterizes the recording sessions is in even more evidence at a live performance.

Much of the beauty of a Stax show is provided by the undisputed queen of the Memphis sound, Carla Thomas. Actually, she was collecting hits even before there was a company called Stax. Her first chart appearance was with a tune she wrote herself called "Gee Whiz (Look at His Eyes)." Since then, she's been a backbone of the Memphis scene. Some of her finest sides were cut with Otis Redding. Busy as she is with recording, personal appearances, and some television, Carla managed not only to get through college, but to get a master's degree in 1966 from Howard University. Since then, she has gone on to study acting, feeling that she can now devote all of her activity to her career as an entertainer. As you may have surmised, Carla, like Stax-mate Booker T., is a product of the black middle-class, where an emphasis has always been placed on education. Her father introduced her to the entertainment world; in fact, he launched her career by going with her to Stax president Jim Stewart's office armed with her tapes. But then, Carla's daddy is a study in himself, and one we'll get to in a minute. Theirs is another one of those extremely talented families; Carla's brother, Marvell, is a busy Stax musician, arranger, writer, and producer; young sister Vaneese has already written several songs for Carla. They are Memphis and music all the way.

The Dells

Now Rufus Thomas. In 1963, you had us all "Walkin' the Dog." It's 1970, and you got us all to "Do the Funky Chicken." What we want to know is, what's been happenin' in between? Well, let's see, there's that nightly radio show (taken over years ago, when B.B. King left it to do a little guitaring) to disk jockey, some week-end gigging in and around Memphis, a little bit of recording, and serving on a Presidential advisory board, and raising that fine, talented family. Now, that should be enough to take us up to "Funky Chicken" time, which the energized fifty-two year old cut at Stax recently and which became an overnight hit. Prior to the "Dog," Rufus had recorded for Sun Records, one of the pioneer Memphis labels. It was Sam Phillips, president of Sun who first hit on the idea of fusing the gospel-blues-soul sound with the country element. The biggest product of that combination was Elvis Presley. Although Sun was to become noted for its early roster of white talent, e.g., Johnny Cash and Carl "Blue Suede Shoes" Perkins, it was one of the first labels to record Ike Turner and Little Milton, and one of the label's first hits was provided by none other than Rufus Thomas. One of the first performers, and as a disk jockey, one of the first promoters of the Memphis sound, Rufus has gotten damn little of the recognition and bread. Such is the price of the pioneer. He was a dee-jay when there was almost no such thing as a black man behind a mike at a radio station. But he made it. Such is the stuff that soul is made of, guts as well as grits, and a big supply of patience.

A perfect example of Stax-Volt versatility is Eddie Floyd. Though best known for his singing, in such tunes as "Knock on Wood," he is also a prolific writer and producer. Back in the fifties he started singing with a gospel group called the Falcons. This group drifted into R & B when it picked up a fantastically talented lead singer named Wilson Pickett. Later, Eddie wrote the big hit "634-5789" for Wilson; another former Falcon, Mack Rice, now also at Stax, wrote Wilson's "Mustang Sally" monster. Eddie wrote and produced "Comfort Me" for Carla Thomas; "Don't Mess with Cupid" for Otis Redding; "Someone's Watching Over You" for Solomon Burke. His "California Girl" broke into R & B and pop simultaneously. Eddie, who stands over six-feet tall, has been dubbed "Greentree" by the rest of the Stax staff; he has proven himself an audience-getter during his travels with the Stax-Volt Revue. His is an all-encompassing musicality that seems to be the strength and specialty of Stax.

One of the brightest Stax stars is soul singer Johnnie Taylor. He did the gospel thing and became a member of the outstanding Highway Q. C.'s when he was twenty. When the late Sam Cooke left the Soul Stirrers, he was replaced by Johnnie Taylor. He later released an album called "Wanted: One Soul Singer," and although it contained a groovy group of tunes, nothing much happened with it. But then, when a few

King Curtis

months later, he did a thing called "Who's Making Love?", he touched a nerve and sold a million copies in five weeks. That, dear friends, is how one becomes an overnight success in this business after being in it from the age of six. He followed with "Take Care of Your Homework," "Testify (I Wonna)," "I Could Never Be President," and his latest "Love Bones." Now he is on anybody's list of top soul stars. All the years on the road learning his thing have given him the know-how of an incomparable performer. Taylor is together.

"Together," in the original, plain peoples' meaning of the word is an accurate description of Isaac Hayes and David Porter who started a producing partnership that was the guiding force behind Sam and Dave. They not only produced the twosome, they wrote their biggest hits, "Hold On, I'm Coming" and "Soul Man." They also co-authored loads of other R & B classics for the Stax set. Then Isaac Hayes decided to do something on his own, an album that would be a personal statement, with no regard to commercial considerations. He made Dionne Warwick's old standard "Walk on By," a twelve minute man's lament. He put in ten minutes of soliloquizing before eight minutes of singing in "By the Time I Get to Phoenix." So unconventional was the result (titled "Hot Buttered Soul" and featuring a head-on shot of his shiny beard-to-ear scalp) that it hit number one not only on the R & B lists, but with the jazz buyers as well. It earned a gold record, the first Stax album to do so.

Now, there is a lot of pain in Hayes' delivery, but there is also a great sophistication of musicality. True, there are lots of growly blues on "Hot Buttered Soul," but the overall concept is not the work of a simple man. Hayes has always demonstrated a complete control of his material. But in this solo venture, he demonstrates a mastery of his unusual material that places him in the top ranks of performers as well as producers. He vines something fierce, let me tell you, and the audience at the famous Fillmore East were as fascinated by his clothes as they were by his performance. (That audience comes in in everything from piano shawls to lamp shades.) They hung on every word, and wanted more. Considering that some slip-up had Hayes following Nina Simone in this, his first New York appearance, it was an unbelievable tribute to him. She had just wrung the audience dry, as she usually does; then in came Hayes, a relatively unknown performer, with his long songs. Well, he killed them, and that was really something. Whoever wasn't there to see Nina was there to see Ritchie Havens, also on the bill. But Mr. Unknown made an impression in that jam-packed house.

When David Porter completed *his* first vocal album, "Gritty, Groovy and Gettin' It," he presented his partner and producer now with his gold record for "Hot Buttered Soul." Now the two have done their own thing.

That doesn't mean they've stopped producing others. Not at all. They've recently taken on a girl group called the Emotions. These three sisters sang gospel at an early age. In their early teens they were spotted by Pervis Staple, who saw great potential in them. He finally brought them around to Stax, where everyone flipped. Now, Jeanette, Wanda, and Sheila Hutchinson after nine years of singing together, perform in the studio like pros, although they are still in their teens. They can learn a new song in ten minutes flat. With everything going for them, if any girl group has a chance of making it, it should be they.

Well, that accounts for some of the activity going on around the Stax studios today. Although it also accounts for much of the Memphis sound, it would be amiss to leave the river city without taking a peep at what some of the other people around there are into. The label Hi, for example, revolves mostly around an extremely gifted trumpeter, Willie Mitchell. He has received many of the R & B instrumentalists' awards over the past several years. He has his own Memphis-born-and-bred group whose original drummer Al Jackson is now an important part of the M.G.'s. Willie plays a variety of instruments, leads the group, produces their records, and has had a number of hit singles. The label also boasts such vocalists as Ann Peebles, Don Bryant, and Al Green, all making Memphis music and grooving with it.

These labels, plus all the independent recording studios in town compose the Memphis sound. Their facilities do not compare with those of New York, Los Angeles, and Detroit; yet, so undeniable is the power and truth of their music that the whole world is hearing Memphis today, and once more music has become a major industry for the city. That old fable about the music "coming up the river to Chicago from New Orleans" is not completely accurate since it doesn't mention the most important stop along the way... Memphis home of the birth and "rebirth" of the blues.

STAR TIME

Dionne Warwick

Dionne Warwick—Sweet Songbird of Soul

When the award-makers and prize-givers tote out their dole at the end of the year, the name of one of soul's best voices is often ommitted from the R & B lists. Because Dionne Warwick sells so heavily in every musical market, they tend to overlook the fact that she is deeply rooted in the soul music tradition. But her fans never forget it, and neither does she. Dionne comes out of the classic pattern of church choir and gospel group singing. But in her case, there is a difference. There has probably never been a singer who is so widely hailed by both black and white audiences; but to omit her from the R & B awards is dead wrong. She has never recorded a song that didn't hit the soul charts, and by the most important gauge of all, the soul audience, she is indeed one of "ours." That audience is a demanding one and has turned its collective back on many artists who retailored themselves tó fit the mainstream image and buying public. Dionne Warwick has never given the people any indication that she has sold out. She plays the Olympia in Paris, but she also plays the Apollo and many of other clubs frequented by black people in other parts of the country. The little girl from New Jersey has won a world-wide audience without losing favor with the "down-home" crowd. She has done as much as any one performer to put a soulful sound

where it was seldom if ever heard before. Hollywood has never been notably kind in its treatment of black subjects and black artists, but Dionne Warwick has been heard on the soundtracks of more movies that any other popular singer in recent years. In fact, some of her fans feel that her best work has been done for films; for example, her unforgettable "Alfie," and "Slaves," the title song of the film she starred in. This was the first movie in which the movie industry ever attempted to portray anything like the truth about black slavery in America, and Dionne received much critical acclaim for her acting ability. To those who have followed her career closely, that came as no surprise. No matter what she is called upon to do on stage or on camera, she does with the graceful, seemingly effortless perfection that is the hallmark of true professionalism.

On records, the results are thrillingly similar. Her inflections are always perfect, her phrasing impeccable. Yet, her voice is so rich and warm, there is nothing of the mechanical quality that mars the appeal of so many other performers. There are no mannered gestures, studied effects, or reliance on technique alone that mark the phony or lightly gifted. Dionne is for real, and her natural gifts have been carefully nurtured, trained, and guided to their present perfection. Strong a word as perfection is, there is no hesitancy in using it here. I have never heard of anyone who didn't respond to her. I have never heard her hit a wrong note, or make an error of taste or judgment. She is an international star of the first rank and has no peer among the many ladies who grace (and sometimes disgrace) today's stages. She comes across with a full measure of beauty and sex appeal and, at the same time, every inch a lady. She has the vocal beauty of an Ella Fitzgerald and the physical glamour of a Lena Horne, but in the distillation there is something that is uniquely her own. It's true that black is beautiful, but there are times that it's gorgeous, and Dionne Warwick is one of those times. She's a long, long, way from New Jersey and the daydreams of a six-year-old girl.

That's how old Dionne was when she first started singing. Her mother was a member of the Drinkard Singers, a famous gospel family. In fact, the Drinkards consisted of Dionne's mother, aunts and uncles. Their home church was the New Hope Baptist in New Jersey, and Dionne played organ while her sister Dee Dee sang in the choir. The two soon formed the nucleus of a teenage gospel group called the Gospel-airs, if you listen to Dee Dee's press agent, Gospelaires, if you listen to Dionne's. Either way, the group traveled and played dates with the Drinkards, and it was on just one such date that fate singled out the two talented sisters. They were appearing at the Apollo Theater when a singer from another group got sick. She had a recording session that she couldn't make, and Dionne and Dee Dee were asked to fill in. This was their first contact with the record business and a very auspicious

contact it was. Record dates started to roll in, and Dionne was soon one of the two busiest sisters on the session circuit. This was not surprising, since, in addition to possessing one of the prettiest and most flexible voices around, Dionne was a highly trained vocalist. One of the most important prerequisites for a studio singer or musician is to be able to sight-read music. This means being able to read a sheet of music as readily as you would read a page of a book, and being able to play it immediately. Studio time is expensive, and very tight; sessions are booked one on top of the other; there usually isn't much time, if any, for rehearsals and retakes. Serious, bright, and studious, Dionne was very ready for such a challenge. She had completed her musical education at Hart College of Music, University of Hartford, Connecticut. Her intention then had been to become a music teacher. In addition to her gospel singing and vocal training, she played the piano and the organ. But the idea of teaching faded fast under the white lights of the recording studios.

It did not take long for someone to discover that Dionne was being wasted in the background. Two very prolific songwriters-producers named Burt Bacharach and Hal David had been knocking around the recording scene trying to put together that first big hit. They sensed the potential of the beautiful girl with the beautiful voice who had been bitten by the bug that makes you itch for stardom. For that itch they scratched out a tune called "Don't Make Me Over." Dionne sang. They rushed it to Florence Greenberg, president of Scepter Records. She pronounced the record better therapy than a Brill Building-ful of chicken soup, and so started one of the happiest (and most successful, which in this business means the same thing) collaborations in popular music. Since then, Bacharach and David have produced all and written most of Dionne's sides. It was after the two took off for Hollywood and took up composing for films that Dionne's voice became almost standard equipment on soundtracks. When they were commissioned to do the music for the Broadway production "Promises, Promises," it was inevitable that Dionne cut an album featuring some of the songs from that score. To the surprise of nobody, her "Promises, Promise" far outsold the original cast recording, and when one of its tunes, "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" began to be done by other singers (mostly white), Dionne's followers demanded she cover it too. (Now *there's* a switch!) It quickly went to the top ten, again showing what an amazing affinity Miss Warwick has with the music of the music-writing team. (Of course, that can be analyzed another way. I think that consciously or subconsciously, they write everything with Dionne in mind; even in cases where a tune's is for something or someone other than Dionne. How else could the Jewish wedding music of "Promises" sound so soulful?)

Strong black writers like Leroi Jones who have seen many soul artist

go "white" as their ambitions brought them into the waters of the mainstream culture have worried, in print, that the same thing would happen to Dionne. Instead, as her popularity has increased among all audiences, she has brought herself closer to home and its influences. After her million-seller "Valley of the Dolls" a film fiasco which, except for her rendition of the title tune, might just as well been left in the can—she did an album of pure gospel, with the Drinkard Singers backing her. Here, she let the power of her voice really hang out, and she made "The Magic of Believing" truly magical. Then, right on the heels of "Promises, Promises," she cut "Soulful." Not only is it a real nitty-gritty R & B workout for the people, but Dionne herself dug it so much that she took out full-page ads in all the music trade publications to say she dug the tunes she was doing. With these two releases, the "goin'-up-to-glory" gospel and the message-tinged R & B, she let the whole world know just where she stands.

There have been, and still are, entertainers who work primarily to white audiences and who seem to get further and further away from their roots. As the ghetto would put it, "Light and bright and damn near white." This is especially descriptive of the token black, light-skinned and "acceptable" who in the old days got a break in some sort of window-dressing job as an indication of progress. There are those performers (Barbara McNair and Leslie Uggams come quickly to mind) whom you would never hear referred to as soul singers. They, and others, are not starving, and good luck to them.

This is not to say that all black entertainers who are loved and supported primarily by white audiences have lost their soul, or souls. There is no black female artist more universally admired than Lena Horne, and that lovely lady has never lost any footing by standing her ground. She has been active and outspoken all her life, and for all of her great success, no one has been more used and abused by the system than she has. She has meant beauty, dignity, and pride, when these were concepts that nobody talked about in relation to black people. Her very presence spoke volumes that nobody quite dared to put in writing. And when it became safe to speak out, she did so, never hiding under a blanket, as so many others did, of being a performer and not a politician.

Dionne Warwick has never moved very far away from her roots; it is unfair to have her treated as if she has. The only ones who seem not to get this message are the music business spokesmen who keep her name off the R & B lists. The 1969 Grammy awards are a classic example of white taste in black music. Dionne's powerful and popular "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling," a soul scorcher that belongs in R & B contention was ignored; instead the rather banal "This Girl's in Love With You" was nominated in the "Best Contemporary Female Vocal Performance" category. This is a charitable catch-all category that lets the judges be

Dionne Warwick

kind towards has-beens and never-weres, and future maybes. Peggy Lee, a great jazz singer with a big pop hit, okay. But Brenda Lee? Vikki Carr? Jackie DeShannon? Dusty Springfield? (Well, maybe now that the latter is doing Aretha, something may happen.) Dionne is simply far out of their field. But then, what do those judges know? With forty-five different categories, they still couldn't find places for Nina Simone, James Brown, The Temptations, the Supremes, and Sly and the Family Stone, even within their segregated R & B listings. Perhaps it is too much for one artist to be R & B and contemporary at the same time, although it is hard to think of R & B as not being contemporary. Enough time spent on that. Right on.

The only time off that Dionne has had in the past few years was when she stopped long enough to have a baby; a little boy named David Leland Elliott was born on January, 1969. This is the only occurence in Dionne's private life that has gotten any publicity at all. She guards her privacy with a determination bordering on fanaticism. It was only with the impending arrival of her son that the world was made aware of the fact that Dionne was even married. Her schedule is so tightly packed with work that the little time she has to spare for her private life is jealously guarded. She will not permit anything in the nature of publicity or any aspect of the business interfere with the time and attention she gives her family. Home is in New Jersey, and to Dionne it is sacred ground.

In paying tribute to the art of Dionne Warwick it would be good to remember that she is not an isolated phenomenon. She's one of a long string of black diamonds whose talent and beauty have provided a sweet glimmer in the long night of despair. Every age seems to have produced a charismatic black female whose talents were devoured by white as well as black audiences; Even the most repressive and oppressive times have not been able prevent these lights from shinning through. Lena Horne has already been mentioned; Ella Fitzgerald deserves a volume unto herself, as does the immortal Billie Holiday who, characteristically, wrote her own volume ("Lady Sings the Blues", published in paperback, Lancer Books, New York). Now just a flicker in the memories of those old enough and fortunate enough to have seen her is the late legendary Florence Mills. During the 1920's she illuminated the black musical-comedy stage, and was one of the principal attractions that brought "slumming" whites up to 125th Street. There is no work on the famous Harlem Renaissance of the twenties that doesn't mention her. She was the darling of the intellectuals and general public alike. A gifted singer, dancer, and comedienne, Florence Mills should have had the success of say, a Barbra Streisand. The "Little Blackbird," as they called her, first flashed on the theater scene in 1921. Composers Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle brought out an all-black revue called "Shuffle Along."

Dionne Warwick

Although much of the content would be very offensive to us today, it did serve to bring brilliant black talents into the limelight. Audiences were electrified by the performances of Ethel Waters, and, especially, Florence Mills. For the next several years, she sparkled on stages all over New York. Then suddenly, she was dead. A week after undergoing an appendectomy at New York's Hospital for Joint Diseases, on November 1, 1927, the Little Blackboard was gone. She stood for a whole generation of beautiful, talented people whose idol she was.

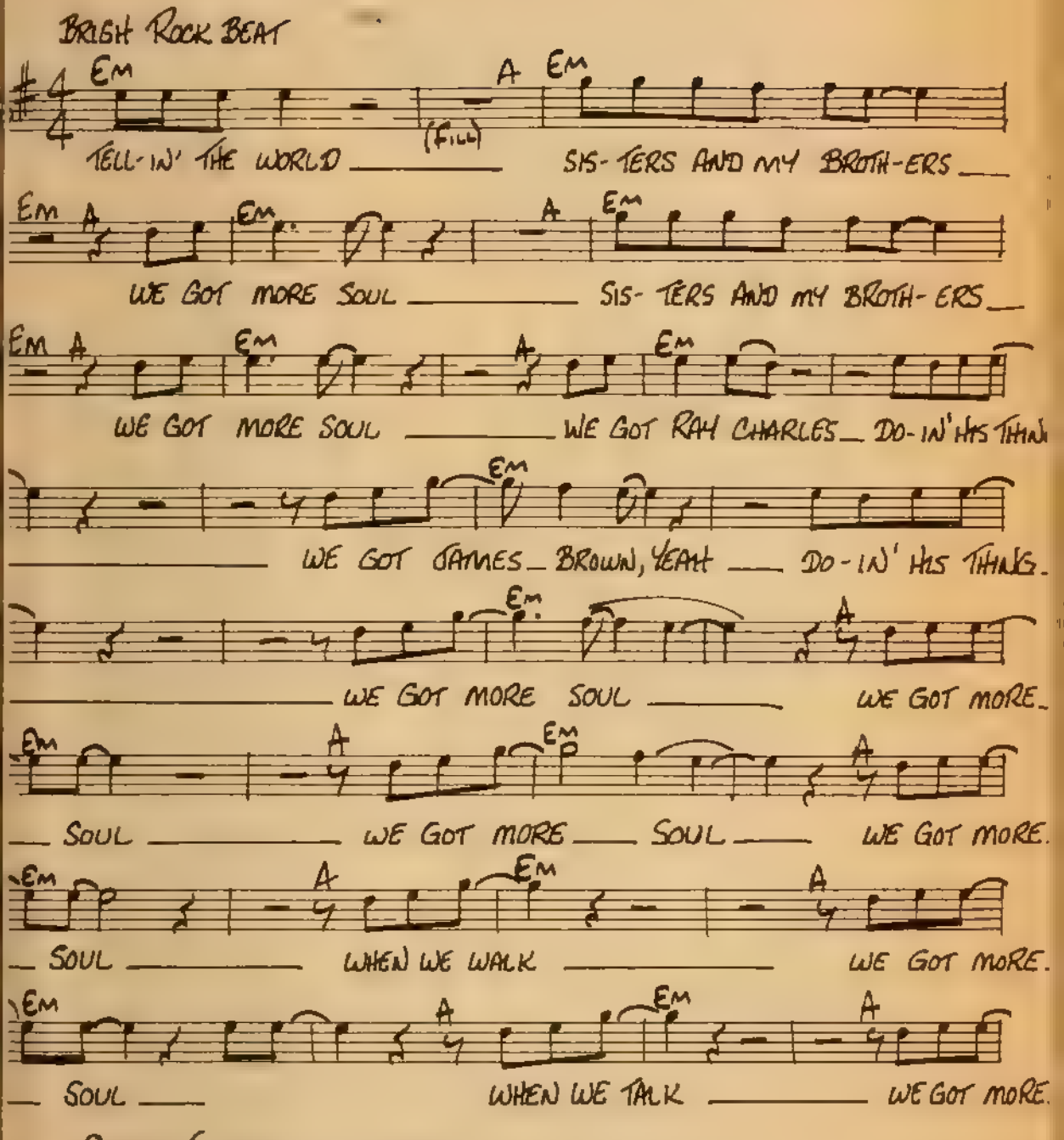
Gone too is the other great artist of the musical stage, Josephine Baker, who left by choice. This magical dancer-singer found her existence unbearable even after she became famous; she fled to the far friendlier arms of the French public, who adored her. Miss Baker became the favorite performer of all that lost generation of American expatriates who found a second home in Paris. She was surrounded and admired by scores of writers, painters, and intellectuals, whose self-imposed exiles had nothing to do with color. But Josephine Baker's did, and when she came home in 1951, she found little reason to stay. This magnificent woman who worked in the French underground during World War II, and later entertained allied troops at great peril to her life, couldn't even get decent service in a New York nightclub in 1951. Back to France and semi-retirement she went. All those fortunate enough to see her will never forget her, or tire of telling us about her.

Florence Mills and Josephine Baker both became famous in the same year, 1921. For all their gifts, life dealt harshly with them. When Miss Mills died, the details were very sketchy. Who knows what treatment the young black woman received (or failed to receive) that led to death after fairly routine surgery. (Shades of Bessie Smith bleeding to death outside the pale of a segregated hospital.) Florence Mills, dead at thirty. Josephine Baker, in exile.

At least today we can offer our stars a better life. Dionne Warwick, soul's songbird today, will receive a greater portion of the rewards that her talent deserves. We can see her on television, and films, hear her on records that are written for her; records that white singers will not "cover" and exploit, and get rich on. She has inherited a very important mantle, and her audiences are fortunate that she wears it as well as she does. She is the true heiress of a proud tradition, and she is fortunate that the inheritors don't have to put dues as heavy as those paid by establishers of that tradition. Her charm, talent, beauty, and taste have won her probably the biggest audience of all of the black songbirds. And in her honesty and integrity as a performer, she has never flown far from the source of her strength. This makes her loved, as well as admired by the people.

WE GOT MORE SOUL

BY
ARLESTER CHRISTIAN



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WESTWARD MUSIC

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. . . The people kept shouting for Hamp's "Flyin' Home," and finally he did it. (I could believe the story I'd heard in Boston about this number—that once in the Apollo, Hamp's "Flyin' Home" had made some reefer-smoking Negro in the second balcony believe he could fly, so he tried—and jumped —and broke his leg, an event later immortalized in song when Earl Hines wrote a hit tune called "Second Balcony Jump.") I had never seen such fever-heat dancing. After a couple of slow numbers cooled the place off, they brought on Dinah Washington. When she did her "Salty Papa Blues," those people just about tore the Savoy roof off. (Poor Dinah's funeral was held not long ago in Chicago. I read that over 20,000 people viewed her body, and I should have been there myself. Poor Dinah! We became great friends, back in those days.)

Malcolm X,
Autobiography

Those Sweet Soul Sisters

Until Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, the legendary Mother of the Blues, wrung her heart out on stages all over the country, there were only two areas of respectable employment for black women in America—domestic work and the church. Ma and her protégé, Bessie Smith, poured their voices into a void and created not only the classic blues, but a whole new concept of what a black woman could do and be. They created an opening in a smothering, all-inclusive blanket of bigotry. No one has suffered more, and suffered worse on this continent than the black woman, whose only hope was the hope of attaining heaven. After the unspeak-

Maxine Brown

able agonies of slavery, she had only the serfdom of the soil, or service in the cities to eat away at her new-found freedom. There was no way out, no gleam of light that led to an opening for imporvement. Ma Rainey started singing the blues around 1902; thus the tradition of a black sister lifting her voice (and her sights) isn't even as old as this century. What a crown of glory, to be studded with so many jewels, in that short span of time!

The blues singers who quickly followed Ma and Bessie appear elsewhere in this book, as do the great voices of gospel. Perhaps the best-known names, the "standards" of female black voices are those generally classified as jazz singers, although collectively and individually their talents carry them far beyond any labeling: the one and only Ella Fitzgerald, a star since the twenties, probably the most honored woman singer in the entire world; Sarah Vaughn, called Sassy, called the Divine, called the best voice in popular music; Carmen McRae, Gloria Lynn, Morgana King, Della Reese, Nancy Wilson. They all have their followings outside as well as inside the ghetto, outside as well as inside the country. They seldom hit the (R & B) charts, but they are respected as members of the black culture even by those who don't buy their records. If Diahann Carroll, who plays to white audiences today just as Ethel Waters did in her day, does not receive the same reverence in the black community that Miss Waters did (and still does), she should perhaps look to her material for an answer.

The jazz voices, as all true black voices, are rooted deeply in the blues, as are the best of the singers who ride the crest of today's popularity. As blues begat its giant offspring, rhythm and blues, names changed, styles changed, songs changed, and the older forms gradually gave way to the newer, more commercial sounds. The transition of style is often a painful and noisy occurrence, as when, in the white world, the kids got tired of their "Mares Eat Oats," and began clamoring for rock and roll. There sprang a division between parent and child over music that widens every day; now they're calling it the generation gap (gulf would be more accurate). But divisiveness over music is almost nonexistent in the black community. The newer forms were so deeply rooted in the old and so very much in tune with them that all that was needed for a smooth transition was voices capable of cooking both ways. Such a voice was the late Dinah Washington's.

In 1944, she was singing with Lionel Hampton; they chopped those charts to bits with things like her famous "Evil Gal Blues" and "Salty Papa Blues." In 1960, she was still doing it, often with Brook Benton, as in "A Rockin' Good Way." Like a bridge of soul, she spanned the era of the Mills Brothers, Louis Jourdan, and Buddy and Lonnie Johnson, and kept right on going after Chuck Berry, the Drifters, Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, and "Motown" had established beachheads on brand new

turf. Aside from gospel, she was the greatest single influence on Aretha Franklin, and as a frequent visitor to the Franklin home, she was idolized by the young Aretha.

While Dinah was still the queen, more and more soul sisters were gaining fame from their recordings, and the decade of the fifties saw the strongest showing since the surge of classic blues women singers in the twenties. The strongest blues voice in a long time, Big Mama Thornton, came along to show the world how it should be done. Her star pupil was a boy named Elvis Preston or Pressman or something like that. But most of the bright young voices were girls of the new school who majored in R & B.

Ruth Brown was one of the best, with a long string of hits to prove it; the ability to sing with a big, sophisticated jazz band was one of her many achievements. LaVern Baker and Edna McGriff were also heard from during a time very much dominated by male voices.

A name to be reckoned with was that of Etta James. She had a great novelty smash called "Dance With Me, Henry," but the old practice of white covers for R & B hits was still the case, and Etta never got the national recognition (and bread) she deserved. She produced hits very consistently after that; as the discoverer of the great Johnny Otis, she always had his hip music behind her. A streak of bad luck kept her on a merry-go-round much of the time; in fact, she was considered finished when she was eighteen years old. She started the seventies in fine style early in 1970, "Tighten Up Your Own Thing" climbed the charts. The strikingly featured Etta could be a classic study of the black artist in America . . . the letdowns, the triumphs, the heartaches, and always the chance that things might get turned around tomorrow and the bright lights get to burning again.

Pretty Maxine Brown first achieved attention in 1961, and she has been a constant performer ever since. Even when the hits weren't happening, she was such an audience pleaser that there was always work for her, and over the years she has brought out an enviable string of memorable tunes. In her lilting and usually happy sound, there is little to indicate the very rough road she has traveled. Orphaned during her teens, she made her own way and finished school; this in an era when kids from stable homes were dropping out with frantic and frightening frequency. Maxine supported herself as a secretary, waiting for her first big hit; singing with first a gospel and then an R & B group. Since her initial smash hit, "It's All in My Mind," she has done some beautiful things, including an album of duets with Chuck Jackson ("Hold On, I'm Coming") and a solo effort on Epic, neither of which got proper attention from record buyers. She popped up again late in 1969 with a new groove, "We'll Cry Together," and proved once again that Brown is beautiful.

Right after Etta and Maxine, the early sixties were hit with a girl

Carolyn Franklyn

Mary Wells

Betty Everett

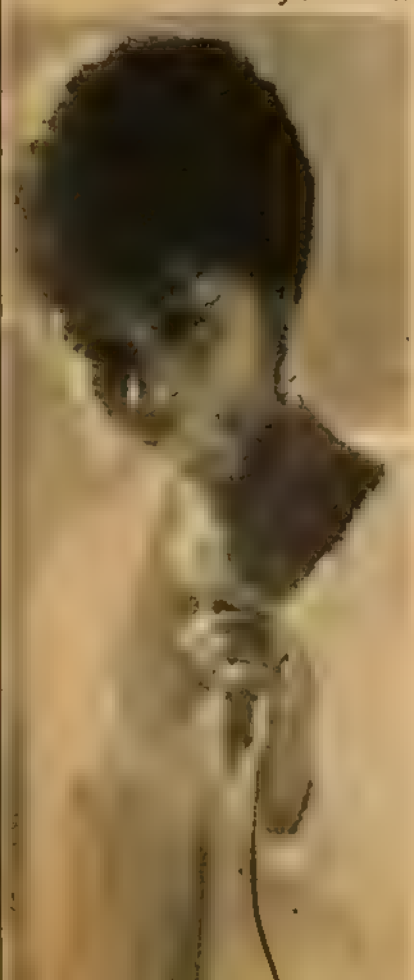
Nancy Wilson

Barbara Acklin

Erma Franklin

Thelma Houston

Cissy Houston



singer who had an enormous impact. One of the earliest artists out of "Motown," Mary Wells was the leading lady in R & B. She was the first female in the modern mode of soul to achieve superstardom; right behind her came a whole new group of soul singers who did the whole gamut from sweetness to sorrow to sex. One of the loveliest ballads to come out of this period was Mary's "My Guy," which has become something of a standard. Mary left Detroit after her initial success, and now calls New York her home. Her material has grown along with her, and she is pleased that she and other singers can now sing songs with deeper meaning. "Dig the Way I Feel" is her message, and she's still showing the rest of the world how it should be done. Because of the flock of imitators who have come after her, it is easy to forget what a pioneer she really was, if one can imagine a pioneer in sequins. But that's exactly how she did it, gorgeously gowned and coiffured, the only female solo soul singer on a bill crowded with male groups and male stars, sprinkled with some of those little girl groups that would never be heard from again. Here was a new kind of black woman shining in the spotlight, not working before an elitist coterie in an overpriced supperclub, but socking it to an audience of the kids who came for the first show, armed with sandwiches and fruit, and stayed all day. This was typical in those vast caverns that housed the early R & B concerts; and talk about tough audiences — those kids kept changing their seats, getting closer to the stage with each new show, and even after the fourth one, they still wanted to be entertained and excited all over again. Mary gave them just what they wanted, and more. Here was an image of glamor, not in a white skin on a movie screen, but right in sight, where the little girls from the ghetto could almost reach out and touch her. That Motown formula in the early days wasn't bold enough to say "Black is Beautiful," but every time Mary Wells or one of the girl groups went on stage, they demonstrated it. That message was never lost on the impressionable young audiences, nor on the would-be followers in Mary's footsteps (who came out of those very audiences). Today, Mary is one of a number of very good singing soul sisters who are stars, but back then she was very much by herself. She is a shining light, continuing to burn brightly.

Not all the females coming along during and since the sixties were cast in that glamorous image. One girl who carved out quite a chunk of attention was the nitty gritty Shirley Ellis whose song hit "Nitty Gritty" made the ghetto expression part of the English language, accessible even to writers of *Time* magazine (who in years past could have been relied on to shun such impurities of language. The soul revolution was not only on, it was overtaking those reporters without their even realizing it). Shirley also hit hard with "The Name Game" a few years later, another irresistable beat novelty. Any day now, she'll get another hit across.

Moms Mabley

She's not a consistent hitter, but when she does come through, it's dynamite.

Betty Everett is a voice that rings sweet, clear, and true. She did some of her best things singing duos with the great Jerry Butler, especially the song they turned into a pop standard, "Let It Be Me," one of the prettiest ballads of early R & B. Her "Shoop Shoop" song was also a heavy. Although she now calls Chicago home, Betty is a constant traveler on the concert circuit, and her "There'll Come a Time" has her much in demand everywhere.

Another Motown starter was Kim Weston. Like Mary Wells, she got to record duets with the label's top male attraction, Marvin Gaye, and cut some groovy discs on her own. Much of Kim's material was written and produced for her by the man she married, a musically versatile man named Mickey Stevenson; after the two of them decided that they had absorbed as much as they needed of the Detroit sound, they moved on to New York. There, Kim expanded her education in the performing arts. She studied acting and dancing, as well as voice, and it all paid off in a big way. She was able to meet the challenge of starring in a Broadway show, touring with Harry Belafonte, and appearing at the poshest nightclubs. Through it all, she's never strayed far from her early training as a member of a Detroit gospel group. Although she has traveled a different route than most of her soul sisters, Kim's greatest successes have been rooted deep in R & B, like her recent "Danger-Heartbreak Ahead." Although she has the training and versatility to move about all over the field of popular music, she seems most at home when she stays at home . . . in Soulville.

Barbara Acklin worked as a receptionist for the record company she now sings for. In fact, she stayed right at her desk, even after cutting a disc, waiting for the big hit to happen, much the same as Maxine Brown tended to her secretarial duties till the big news broke. Barbara did some duets with Gene Chandler, and while there was some action then, it wasn't until she warbled "Love Makes a Woman" into the mike that it really happened. Since then, she's given up her desk job for her disc jobs, and she has established herself as an important newcomer . . . and stayer, on the soul scene.

All of the singers here can of course be called "soul sisters," but there are some for whom the expression is doubly appropriate. They are sisters in the most literal and sense of the word: Erma and Carolyn Franklin, sisters to Aretha, and Dee Dee Warwick, sister to Dionne. While there are some similarities between the voices of the sisters, each is a distinct talent on her own. (If this weren't the case, they'd all still be singing in background choruses.)

All three of the Franklin sisters started in the choir of their father's New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, and if their daddy

saves souls anything like the way his daughters sing soul, heaven's gonna be a very crowded place.

Erma Franklin got into R & B before her famous sibling. She had a tremendous hit with "Piece of My Heart," which was later put on the repetoires of other vocalists, black and white; but nobody ever ripped it apart like Erma did. She is the kind of singer who outlasts fads and styles in music and brings strength and conviction to each song.

Carolyn is the youngest of the Franklin family of five (the two other members are brothers; one's a minister, the other is in the military). In many ways, this youngest member may be the most versatile. In addition to singing and leading the backgrounds on many of Aretha's recordings, Carolyn has written some of her sisters' and her own best songs, like Aretha's "Baby, Baby, Baby," Erma's "Don't Wait Too Long," and her own "I Don't Want To Lose You." She also worked on the score of an off-Broadway show, and plays not only the piano, but the clarinet.

The three Franklin sisters are unusually close for a show business family; probably a lot has to do with their being brought up in a close-knit, religious atmosphere. Although Aretha is by far the superstar of the family (indeed the world), there is no jealousy or rivalry between them. They've all paid their dues and respect each other for it. Their public graciousness to each other has too real a ring to be phony, and there is a "family" feeling about them that cannot be manufactured.

The Warwick family was as deeply involved in the world of gospel music and the church as the Franklins. However, although Dee Dee Warwick still loves gospel music above all others and finds it the strongest and most authentic of all music, her voice has such commercial value that she was overwhelmed with work as soon as she made her first studio appearence. Hers was the most sought-after voice for background sessions in all of New York; she could have had a permanent and very lucrative career doing studio work. But Dee Dee is a perfectionist and drives herself constantly. Doing background work soon lost its challenge, and there was no doubt that she possessed the voice, the looks, and the personality to be right up front. Her hot hit "Foolish Fool" was enough to justify all the decisions Dee Dee made relative to her career. She was never meant to stand in anybody's shadow, and she's a welcome sparkler on the soul spectrum.

That ever-spreading spectrum holds so many sisters of superior quality that it's hard to note all of them. Names like Tina Britt, Betty Lavette, Freda Payne, Judy Clay, Ella Washington, Baby Washington, Ruby Andrews, Bettye Swann (note especially the song "Don't You Ever Get Tired of Hurting Me?"), Candi Staton, Gloria Taylor, Rhetta Hughes, and Doris Duke will continue to be heard from. There are also new people on the scene who are such outstanding talents that, although

their individual commercial impact has yet to be felt, there is little doubt of their success in the coming years. They have strong voices that demand equally strong material. Thelma Houston had her debut with a stunning album that boiled over with soul strength of the most imperative kind, but seemed to have been appreciated mainly by jazz listeners. Her brand of R & B is sure to make itself felt in the community where she has worked hard as nurse's aid, Head Start member, and therapist for handicapped children. There's much heart and head as well as soul going for her. Dig "Save the People." This is greatness!

Esther Marrow is another label-loosener. She could be discussed equally appropriately in the blues or jazz chapters It is felt, however, she will have her biggest impact in the biggest market, where most people are listening.

Brenda Patterson has one of those great big churchy voices, encased in a tiny, but obviously mighty frame. She is a real old-style blues shouter, which is a really great style for a 21 year old. This collection of contrasts works in a most effective way.

Cissy Houston was the anonymous lead back-up voice on hundreds of records. Her first break out of the no-name status came when her group was dubbed first Sweet Inspirations and then Cissy Houston and the Sweet Inspirations. Now she's left the S.W.'s to go solo, and tremendousness can be rightfully anticipated. I heard her "challenge" Aretha Franklin at Philharmonic Hall to a few choruses. Nobody lost, especially not the audience, which was held spellbound by the thrilling outbreak, soaring and unaccompanied.

It would be terribly amiss to close without mentioning a woman who has sold as many records as anyone around, but is as difficult to place in a musical category as any of the singers we've mentioned, although for entirely different reasons. Actually, it was only on one of her most recent releases that she could be persuaded to lift that glorious voice in song at all. But so beloved is she, that this initial offering was immediately singled out and became a best-selling chart item. Who is our lady? She's none other than the one and only Moms Mabley, the funniest woman in the world, and probably the most soulful. When she turned away from her inimitable comedy act to sing "Abraham, Martin and John," she showed a private self that few people had ever witnessed. The community elder stateswoman, the most rational commentator in the vapid wasteland of television talk shows, the youngest, freest expression on either side of the generation gap, Moms has finally become a household word in households where, in another day, she might have been wasted as a menial worker. (And, despite her claims to youth, Moms was from another day.) Instead, after working more than forty years in the business, after suffering all the tribulations and paying all the dues, she has come up a winner having a fresher mind, a stronger

delivery, and being a better laugh-getter than anyone in the business. If suffering is one side of the soul coin, then surely smiling is the other. Jackie Moms Mabley is mint gold, the mother of us all. And if she's not really a singer, you say, and doesn't really belong here, well, neither do you. Right off.

Those Big Bad Brothers

As an idol and influence, the black male singer stands alone in a place that is uniquely his own and unmatched anywhere else in the annals of entertainment. His life style sets the standard for his audience, and his attainments are the stuff their dreams are made of. We know full well that in America, not every boy can be president, but almost any boy can have that hit some day. That, and all that goes with it are the aspiration of boy on the streets.

In a society that gives a black man no extras with his money, no passports to paradise, prestige, or partnership in the Great Dream, almost any other type of success would be hopelessly square. All he can do is spend the bread in grand gestures that used to be called "conspicuous consumption," but are now readily accepted as signs of "making it." It accounts in large part for the Cadillac complex that so many blacks fall victim to. There is a slowly growing middle class, but their climb for the most part emulates that of the white culture. They are as far removed as that culture from the black masses. With very few exceptions, R & B stars are from the ghettos of the north or impoverished rural southern areas, and they stay close to those roots even after they've made it. Thus the dreamers and the dreams are all part of the same continuum,

Sam Cook

Otis Redding

and they constantly feed each other, in their functions as audience and artist. What the star has -or the audience imagines he has—is what the audience craves: money, clothes, cars, women, and the admiration of the community, not necessarily in that order. The successful black businessman, legitimate or street-corner hustler, can come up with the tangibles on that list, but there is no getting away from the fact that the big-name entertainer is the gatherer of public love and admiration. Since in America, only his own communities can bestow those commodities on the black man, the entertainer stands at the pinnacle of achievement in black life. White America can dig James Brown, but, except in the most superficial way, they can not understand where he's at.

The only relaxation that the slaves knew (except for a day or so at Christmas) was at church. While the black congregation has always been far more participatory than their white counterpart, the taking part in the service was primarily background for the preacher (till it was time for the ring-shuffle, anyway). The preacher was truly a performer, and many of the mannerisms of the earliest "performers" have survived to this day. (America has no greater showman than Adam Clayton Powell, but that's another book.) Because the great majority of the black stars are church-trained, many of these qualities are present even in the men doing the most secular material. (It takes little imagination to see Wilson Pickett as a preacher. The church's loss was the world's gain.) All this is by way of saying that the performer was never a despised figure in black society as he often was in the white world. The stage, especially in music, was a way out; just as police work, politics, or the prize ring once were the way for the Irish in America. What mother was going to despise a profession that could lift her son from the unmitigated misery of their daily lives? Thus the prestige of the entertainer is a deep-rooted tradition of black life. Because even the strongest minority can not dominate the politics or the finances of this country, there is even further justification for a man of talent to seek his way in the arts. The black community is well aware of this, and that is why an entertainer can be as respected as a doctor, lawyer, or banker. That is why a James Brown can contemplate going into politics; he knows he has the solid support of the community behind him.

The real world of the performing artist, naturally, is not nearly as glamorous and elegant as the audience would like to believe it is, nor is the task of the performer nearly as easy as the true professional makes it look. The climb is precarious, and the defeats and humiliations along the way break many young performers before they are anywhere near decent gigs or recognition. The ones who do make it are masters not only of the arts of R & B, but of survival and self-preservation. They must be, to outlast the grinding one-nighters, constant travel, dirty, crowded, drafty dressing rooms, the alienation and detachment one feels

in strange and unfriendly places. Everything, from the place of performance to the pay reeks of the third-rate. Until one reaches the top, the conditions for the black artist are abominable, but even the raunchyness of the experience constitutes a breach in that ghetto wall; dues have got to be paid. But true talent can not and will not be denied. It will withstand mafia club owners, cheating promoters, stealing managers, as well as broken-down buses and missed trains. Talent will out: in soul music, there are no unsung Miltons (only Little Miltons, and Little Walters, and Little Richards, and Little Esthers, too!). Like the Biblical angel, we shall make note of the happier times and deeds and thus exorcize all those demons that populate the nether showbiz shores. Every artist here has paid his dues . . . believe it. But every individual pays at his own rate, and it isn't for us to recheck his totals. Anyway, since we were just name-dropping, let's atone for our own sin by picking up on a name we dropped—Little Milton.

Much is typical: the Mississippi boyhood, the church choir singing, the early interest in the guitar, the knocking around for many years, trying to put groups together, trying to get somebody to listen. Finally, somebody did listen, and as soon as Little Milton started recording for "Chess" in Chicago, his unique individuality became apparent; as at home in blues as in rhythm n' blues, his universal themes had a very contemporary sound. He sang "We're Gonna Make It," and told the girl that they might have to eat "beans every day," and wouldn't be able to give a roach a crumb, but that they'd come through okay anyway; he gave the ballad a pithy realism seldom heard in love songs. He carried the same style with him into a whole lotta hits, including the wonderfully metaphorical "Grits Ain't Groceries" ("If I don't love you baby, then grits ain't groceries, this ain't poetry, and the Mona Lisa was a man"). Well, it sure is poetry baby, dig it. Little Milton (Campbell) is telling it to ya.

Another name that completely blurs away the difference between blues and R & B is Bobby "Blue" Bland. He grew up in the blues, living near Memphis, digging what was known as the West Memphis group of bluesmen: Sonny Boy Williamson, Memphis Slim, Muddy Waters, Johnny Ace, and B.B. King, with whom Bland played the Fillmore East recently, in one of his first appearances outside ghetto location. This exposure told a lot of people something that the ghetto had known for years: Bobby Bland is a unique artist who delivers a taste of the blues that is damn near unforgettable. There is a shade of Ray Charles in his voice that denotes delivery that will make contact with everyone within hearing. To B.B.B., no one has a right to sing the blues unless he's really had them. He says the blues have been telling the story of the black man's struggles for years, that "The Man" could stop the black man from talking back, but he couldn't stop him from singing back, because

Jackie Wilson

Gene Chandler

Joe Simon

Joe Tex

Bobby Womack

O.C. Smith

R.B. Greaves

Arthur Conley

The Man didn't know what he was singing. All the time he was "telling him like it was" in a song. And when you hear him sing "Ask Me 'Bout Nothing but the Blues," you get the message loud and clear. It is his consistent popularity that takes him out of the purist blues genre; he is always one of the leading R & B voices and makes use of more commercial material than the strictly blues singers. Bobby Bland is a powerhouse of talent and conviction; he packs a song with exactly the same degree of believability as a top gospel singer. He can do a Broadway ballad and turn it into a piece of truth. Fully cognizant of his ability, he has managed to remain unembittered by the circumstances of lesser talents always grabbing off the top honors and heavier bread. His name has never appeared on the pop music charts; his records sold in ghetto area stores only. "They" say things are opening faster than ever; they should tell it to this man who should be booked into every major club, first-rate concert hall, and large university in the country. This is the perfect example of dues/blues: the artist who should have had widespread national recognition long before this and is just starting to get a little bit of it now. Till hearts and minds and souls open up, nothing else will really open, or for long. Bobby Bland is only one name that hasn't been given proper consideration, but he belongs at the top of the list.

For a happier story and a happier song let's turn to Joe Tex. (Joe is completely serious about the Tex part; a lot of his loot has gone into the purchase of a horse ranch and string of horses.) This bouncy balladeer socks out advice that shows Dear Abby for the rank amateur she is. From his first tune, he has been telling us how to hold on to what (meaning who) we got, whether it's a sweet woman who got what it takes, or just a pair of skinny legs and a pure heart. The advice is tongue-in-cheek, witty and sly, and all written by Joe himself. Soul people are so versatile! So is their music, as Joe Tex very amply demonstrates. His whole bag lyrics, music, voice is quite different from anything anyone else is doing. His roots are gospel and blues, but he has evolved a completely different style. He sings of love and all its familiar ramifications, all told in the most down-home basics and phrases. His attitude is so light-hearted, his expression so real and honest that the catchy lyrics and sweet beat are irresistable, and smiling is as swift a reflex as dancing. His is another facet of soul that adds much sparkle to the pretty gem.

A singer who can work the many sides of soul is Chicago-born Lou Rawls. He goes from gutsy hard blues and the soul stories he calls his monologues to sweet, smooth tunes. Chances are that a lot of the people who admire him on his television appearences wouldn't understand three words of his "Street Corner Hustler's Blues," one of the most devastating pieces of action ever captured on wax. His background is as solid as can be. He started with the Pilgrim Travelers, one of the

best of the all-male gospel groups. Since arriving on the pop scene, he has worked with such heavies as Les McCann, Cannonball Adderley, and Nancy Wilson. Lou has a record of hits that a major leaguer would envy. His polish has given him entrance into gigging at the best joints in the country, but his sense of reality keeps him based in Nitty-Grittyville, the obvious source of his very real strength.

We love to hang names on popular entertainers; one of the most appropriate is the "Ice Man," Jerry Butler to y'all. His soul burns with a coolness that is the ultimate, complete cool; that is to say, that he's so hot he's cool; it's something like dry ice. Things get so hot or so cold you can't tell the difference. But whatever it is that's working on him doesn't show. Unlike the performers who give out visible buckets of sweat like so much love they're pouring out over you, the Ice Man stays unruffled on stage. Jerry was one of the original Impressions; they reformed the trio when he decided to go solo, and it's worked out beautifully for all concerned. Jerry's hits go back eleven years, but it took "Only the Strong Survive" to go over a million in sales and land him on the pop charts. He does dozens of college dates every month, and has his finger on where the mood of the kids is at with a greater degree of accuracy than almost any other entertainer. That audience loves him; his concert fees have tripled in the last three years, yet dig this. By his own estimation, his concert earnings of $150,000 a year would be $750,000 if promoters hired him for all the white audiences that want him. There is still segregation built into and maintained in the system, not by the audiences that pay, but by the businessmen who make the bread and say they fear the "element" that a soul or rock artist might attract. So Jerry does his twice yearly stands at the Apollo, at the venerable Howard, and the Regal in Chicago, and concentrates most of his other personal appearances at both black and predominantly white colleges, keeping his cool, knowing there is a vast audience that's buying his records, digging his sound, but is being kept from him. Racism has always been a two-way street, no matter which side of it you're working. While the Ice Man's loss is financial, the loss on the other side might be even greater, "cause there ain't no price on soul no way."

When Jackie Wilson was the hottest star in the music world, with only Elvis in front of him, television was virtually a closed door to soul artists. There wasn't anyone who could turn an audience on the way Jackie could, yet much of the country was completely unaware of him, except when some bizarre event brought him national publicity. Jackie was a prototype, and even today, much of the onstage activities that up-and-coming young vocalists indulge in are taken right out of his book. The flash of jewelry, the working unto exhaustion, the undressing (only the jacket and tie, folks) have probably had their influence on many, including James Brown. He was and is R & B personified. (Yet he could

do a gentle version of the "Danny Boy" that was equal, if not the superior to anybody else's. In fact, it was his success with that old-timey tune that brought it back into the popular repetoire.) His R & B classic is "Baby Work Out," the traditional Harlem bandleader's invitation to the audience to dance. He is still a top night club attraction, and in the top night clubs at that. If he had been white, he'd have been a millionaire. (Well, they say that if Chuck Berry had been white, he'd have been Elvis Presley, who presumably would have still been driving a truck.)

Another name that conjures up much nostalgia is Ben E. King. And king he was, singing things like "Spanish Harlem" and, as lead singer with the Drifters, "Save the Last Dance For Me." There has been *nothing* like his "I Who Have Nothing." On a recent television soul show he looked and sounded better than ever. The once and future king of soul, he can be expected to start happening all over again, any time. No one has fans with longer memories and his impact was incredible. He's an R & B romanticist, which is a very pretty thing.

Another very pretty thing that has come by recently is called R. B. Greaves. (If you're wondering why he's called just R.B., well, there's Ronald Bertram Aloysius behind the initials, and that's reason enough . . .) This half Seminole Indian hit with a tune titled "Take a Message, Maria" that put a lot of people in mind of Sam Cooke. (They've been looking for another Sam Cooke since 1964; that's another story. Later.) R.B. kept right on cooking with "Always Something There to Remind Me"; this made it amply evident that an important new talent was on the scene. With his sweet, clear delivery and clean-cut good looks, anyone who didn't think he was the most promising everything of the year must have been out of the country. Handled by some of the most capable people in the business, he can't miss. He's also reputed to be a quick-draw expert, which helps. Maybe he's one-half Indian and one-half cowboy. In any case, he's one hundred percent talent, which is all that really counts on this range.

Another man with initials is O.V. Wright. A graduate of the top gospel groups Sunset Travellers and Highway Q.C.'s, he swung over to secular soul while with the latter group. Strongly blues-oriented as befits a Delta boyhood, he grew up around Memphis, listening to the West Memphis group of blues men who later made Chicago famous with their sound. O.V. (which does *not* stand for Oy Vay, another brand of blues entirely) absorbed both urban and country inflections from the singers he heard and wove these separate strands into a light-textured style that is punctuated with gospel-begotten improvisations. This is a very distinctive soul singer who should command a much wider audience. He overflows with essense of soul and is very easy to take always. O.V. is all right.

And so is O.C., Smith that is, one of the best voices to hit the air in

he last decade. When he sang "Little Green Apples," it gave most of the other singers a little green envy. He made it into the song of 1968, which s no small accomplishment for a soul singer with a jazz background and a country and western tune. It is probably the three years he spent with Count Basie that accounts for the perfection in his delivery. But he depth of feeling that is so apparent in his intonation and choice of material can only come from within. In his hands the C & W tune became the ultimate soul song. Same with an earlier hit, "Hickory Holler's Tramp," as earthy a story as ever hit the airwaves, but with a solid ring of truth to it. (It tells the story of a son remembering his mother who was left with a shack-ful of kids and no means of supporting them, urning to prostitution to keep them from starving. It is sung with no ense of shame but a pride that rises above convention-molded feelings.) t was powerful material, and with it, O.C. Smith seems to have found his true voice. In later outings, he treated the problems of the forced marriage (Isn't It Lonely Together?") and the divorced father ("Daddy's Little Man"). It's all so much meatier than the current run of pop standards he had been doing before. With the Basie background, he could have easily stayed within the mainstream and done all right, but using reality as his basic root has made him a much more substantial singer. Had he not gone this route, he would probably have spent the rest of his professional life as a superior lounge act. Traveling this road, he may become one of the most important singers of his time.

Joe Simon has jammed a truckload of hits into a relatively short time span. He records in Nashville, the home of the country rather than soul sound, but there's no question of where he's at. All sorts of people have picked up on his sound, and the amount of airplay he gets is phenomenal for a soul singer. (Maybe they don't know.) The sports-minded bachelor honed his vocal cords (and chords) at church and revival-tent events, so true gospel jab is hitting at you all the time. (He sang "The Old Rugged Cross" at Otis Redding's funeral, moving the enormous crowd to tears.) And forget everybody else's rendering of "In The Ghetto," including the original. Joe Simon's is it. A big, black voice already in a position of leadership.

Like a river of velvet, the voice of Brook Benton has been flowing for more than a decade. Smooth soul, singly or with Dinah Washington, he has been one of the most consistant hit makers. Even when there's an ache in his voice, like the recent and unforgettable "Rainy Night in Georgia," it isn't hard-edged blues, but an almost sweet weariness that comes across. In 1959, he first hit singing three solid smashes; he co-authored two of them, and wrote another one, "I'll Take Care of You," that Bobby "Blue" Bland hit with. Quite a beginning. One hundred years from now, when the Golden Age of Soul is being analyzed, Brook Benton will be counted a heroic figure.

Indeed, the Pantheon erected to commemorate the soul singers will be a mighty crowded place. Places will have to be found for a whole host of names and faces, like Gene Chandler, Chuck Jackson, Solomon Burke, Clarence Carter, Walter Jackson, James Carr, Major Lance, Lenny Welch, Carl Carleton, Billy Stewart (whose death in an accident in early 1970 was an untimely shock), Don Covay, Bobby Womack, Garland Green, David Walker, Percy Sledge, Al Wilson, Tyrone Davis, Percy Mayfield and others. Twin thrones will have to be provided for "Soul Brother Number One" and "The Genius" overlooking the Wilson Picket archway. Unfortunately, the candles have already been lit for two of our greatest, the standard-bearers for all the young men who follow them; Sam Cooke and Otis Redding. Already, the courtyards of soul are crowded with the would-be heirs to these two greats. As if they could ever be replaced.

They both stood at the pinnacle of soul when they died. They had just caught the attention of the rest of the world in a significant way, and were ready for the conquering next moment when they'd have it all. They died three years apart, almost to the day. And different though their styles were, no important singer has come along since then who hasn't been compared to one or the other. Sam, the senior of the two, had given up being lead singer of the Soul Stirrers, a top gospel group, to go into pop music. By 1957, he was already on the charts, a sometimes blue, sometimes light, always skillful singer who was his own best writer. In fact, he was one of R & B's best writers, as attested to by the use of his material made by Aretha Franklin, the Supremes, and now even Ray Charles. Ironically, his song of protest, the haunting "A Change is Gonna Come," was released days after his death, as was "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay," Otis' first pop hit. Otis dominated the R & B charts during his last year, and at 26 hadn't even developed to his full capacity as an artist. His death at that age can be equated in the loss to soul music with the loss to English literature represented by the death of the poet Shelley at the same age. We should respect the individual gifts of our artists as being unique and irreplaceable; no young poet was ever hailed as the "new" Shelley. There will be shades and nuances and evocations of Sam and Otis as long as there is soul, and we are fortunate in having their voices forever fixed on record and tape. But there will be no replacements, and young talent shouldn't have the burden of such labels put upon it. Nor should we fall into the trap of such false thinking. There will never be another Otis Redding, or Sam Cooke, but the "spirit" of the two shall always be with us, and for this we should be grateful. Shakespeare wrote "Taken all in all, he was a man. I shall not look upon his like again." Let Joe Simon be Joe Simon, Eddie Holman be

Lou Rawls
Wilson Pickett

Eddie Holman, R.B. Greaves be R.B. Greaves. Above all, let Wilson Pickett be

WILSON PICKETT

because he's now our man.

The most imitated singer on the current scene, and the one who turns more fans to R & B than any other single performer, he wrote songs and sang with a group called the Falcons before going on his own. Prior to that, of course, was the ritual gospel background. He was born in Alabama, but the family escaped to Detroit when Wilson was in his teens. Until the Falcons found him, he was relatively unaware of the whole scope of R & B, having confined his singing to church and gospel groups. He soon found out what an affinity he had for the music, both as a performer and writer. In 1963, Solomon Burke had a hit with one of Wilson's tunes, "If You Need Me." By 1965, he was doing it for himself with "Don't Fight It." Since then, it's been one hit after another: "Mustang Sally," "Midnight Mover," "In the Midnight Hour," "634-5789," "Land of 1,000 Dances," "Funky Broadway," and others.

There were those who say he stood in Otis' shadow, but they weren't listening too tuff. Them what was listening proper heard things like the Beatles' "Hey Jude" sung like it never was in the original. Wilson's version stamped it a soul song, and it's never been the same since; it's become a permanent part of the R & B repetoire. (Dionne did it on her "Soulful" lp, her tribute to R & B songs. It couldn't have been the Beatles who categorized it for her.)

Wilson has been credited with the conversion of more souls to soul than any other artist. Be that as it may, it is the black audiences who love him wildly, who have placed him way up there. Now everybody wants him. The wicked Pickett is the biggest, baddest brother of them all. He belts it out as hard and heavy as any of the country blues singers. He aims straight for the heart of soulville, and makes it. His voice can be harsh and mean, wailing and grating; a hoarse, coarse weapon making an attack on your ears at the same time it is making contact with your emotions. It is one of the ironies of the system that he isn't one of the three top superstars in America today.

Do the same forces that keep Jerry Butler from certain lucrative bookings operate also to keep Wilson Pickett from being a television regular? Is it an unwritten code, or the semiconscious realization of the "gentlemen" who control television, that given half a chance, these black stars would completely dominate American entertainment? That the watered-down versions would no longer satisfy even the most vapid audiences? Professional boxing's search for "The Great White Hope"

who would unseat the first black champion brought that sport to its lowest ebb. Can it be that the men who manage American entertainment are playing their own version of that sick game? Perhaps too much money has already been spent on the careers of little talented, mainstream performers to risk a black onslaught of talent that would not only rock the boat, baby, it might sink the ship altogether. Black art and black artists have long been dominating the record business, and if the other areas of show business do not give them the recognition that this fact alone should ensure, perhaps the next arena will be the streets, as it has been for those other big, bad brothers.

To a black man the blues means misused, misused by your woman, your man, your mother, your father, the boss man, police, judge, mayor, welfare department, housing commission, school board or society in general. It's the blues. Mr. Webster says the blues is "a form of depression, a word commonly used by American Negroes." Mr. Webster is right because misuse brings on depression. Mr. Webster, however, does not really know, because Mr. Webster never had the blues.

Bobby "Blue" Bland

Blues on Blues

The blues . . . the blues. The men who sang the blues had nothing but their music. That's why it doesn't work when those who have other options elect to sing the blues. Muddy Waters said:

> ". . . these young white kids that are playing in the old style. Now, maybe they feel the blues like I do, and maybe they can play like I do, but they can't *sing* like I do."

Neither can they pick five-hundred pounds of cotton a day, like B. B. King (Riley B. King, officially), did (at thirty-five cents per hundred pounds). Nor did they have to stand and sing on street corners in Memphis or Chicago for the pennies, nickels, and dimes that passersby would throw. These are the only two schools that teach the blues: the fields and the streets. You "graduated" from the first (dropped out is more like it) to go north to finish that education.

Ray Charles

It always began the same way, a child already carrying the burdens of an adult, hearing a snatch of music that was the only visible sigh of relief on a delta day. Buddy Guy tells it. "When I was a child in Baton Rouge, I heard it played on the front doorsteps of the houses in our section . . . I used to scratch out the rhythms on the screen door of our front porch."

B.B. Kind recalls: "The preacher used to play guitar in the church, and afterwards he would usually go back to my uncle's, and I would go too, because I liked to fool with his guitar . . . I learnt by just watching and listening to that preacher play."

Junior Parker made a choice; when he was five years old, his mother gave him a harmonica and a b.b. gun. He drew a bead on the harmonica and never touched the gun.

Otis Spann was seven when he started picking out tunes on a piano. When he was eight he won a local talent contest playing Bessie Smith's "Backwater Blues." Today, hands down, he is the best blues pianist there is.

Ivory Joe Hunter was one of fourteen children. His parents christened him thus because "they didn't want me ever to forget the piano."

Albert Collins was introduced to the guitar by his cousin Willow who made a guitar out of a cigar box for him. He made his second guitar for him too. "This time," says Albert Collins, "it was made from an oak tree."

Muddy Waters says: "I was messing around with harmonicas ever since I got large enough to say 'Santy Claus, bring me a harp!' " (Harp is bluesmens' name for the harmonica, which, along with guitar, is the most important blues instrument.)

The three great teachers in the university of the blues were Lemon Jefferson, Charlie Patton, and Sonny Boy Williamson. When Lightin Hopkins crept up behind Blind Lemon Jefferson with a battered guitar at a Texas barbecue, he was only eight years old, but he had found his first teacher. And Lightnin' (Sam to y'all) wasn't the only one on whom the legendary Lemon left his mark. The whole family of T-Bone (Aaron) Walker was musical, and it wasn't unusual for Lemon to stop off and have a blues session with them. T-Bone was his lead-boy as Lemon walked the Dallas streets singing for hand-outs. Lemon was also a great influence on Howlin' Wolf (Chester Burnett), a delta farmhand till he met Charlie Patton, the area's most celebrated bluesman, who got Howlin' wailin'. Later, it was Sonny Boy Williamson who taught him to play the harp. "Sonny Boy Williamson," says B.B. King, "gave me my first break." Junior Parker was in a Mississippi cottonfield, begging his mama to let him go into the house to hear his idol on the radio. A few days later the idol appeared in their little town and picked the youngster out of the audience and asked him to play. Again, it was Sonny Boy, whose

friends knew him as "Rice" from his days in the field, who started another bluesman on his way. The masterful Williamson died in 1965, having influenced every blues artist he came across or who heard the recordings he started making in 1929.

Other great blues teachers, according to bluesmen are Big Bill Broonzy, mentioned by Little Walter, Eddie Vinson and Memphis Slim. Robert Johnson and Son House are Muddy Waters' choices. Muddy Waters is John Lee Hookers man. Albert King nominates T-Bone Walker. They all played the blues, and they taught and learned from each other; in some cases, they were even related. Otis Spann is the half-brother of Muddy Waters. Earl and John Lee Hooker are cousins. So are Albert Collins and Lightnin' Hopkins, and Bukka White and B.B. King. They came from the dusty little towns of the rural south, mostly from the Mississippi delta. Indianola was home to both B.B. and Albert King; Clarksdale, to Junior Parker and Earl and John Lee Hooker; Otis Spann is from Jackson, Otis Rush from Philadelphia, Howlin' Wolf from West Point, Sonny Boy Williamson from Tallahatchie (where they knew him as "Rice" Miller), and Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield) from Rolling Fork. Texas bluesmen include T-Bone Walker, Harmonica Slim (Travis Blaylock), Eddie Vinson, Albert Collins, and Ivory Joe Hunter. They travelled the south, many passing and stopping at Memphis, then on to Chicago. (The big city man is Joe Turner, who with his pianist-partner, the late and masterful Pete Johnson, kept Kansas City rocking for a long time.)

The bluesmen gravitated to Chicago, as did hundreds of thousands of other poor blacks. Thus, artist and audience found in each other a touch of "down home." For the bluesmen, Chicago was an important recording center. It was there that many of the greats got to play together for the first time. A Muddy Waters recording session could include Buddy Guy on guitar, Little Walter on harp, Clifton James on drums, and Willie Dixon on bass. (It isn't too easy to find Willie on records any more. He is so gifted and prolific a song writer, he has had to put down his bass to concentrate on composing. In one year, Muddy Waters alone had three hit records written for him by the ageless, timeless Dixon, who is virtually unknown to the public but has more great songs to his credit than virtually anyone else in the business.)

Then came a switch to electric equipment. John Lee Hooker says, "I didn't start with an electric guitar; some places you have to, because when you're playing for dances you can't sit down with an acoustic and people not hear you 'cause you can't hit it hard enough, and then the same thing when I play in bars, the people drinking and you got to have something to be over them, don't you just be there playing and nothing happening so you figure you'll just have to use that." Howlin' Wolf: "When I moved to West Memphis, I bought myself an electric guitar."

Muddy Waters: "If everybody's using them, what you gonna do?" With the rise of R & B, the bluesmen were right at home; already electrified, they recorded with Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry and others, and went on to influence the whole wave of white young imitators from both sides of the Atlantic. We find a lot of them today are idols in Europe, as well as at home, recognized as being the originators of everything important that is happening in pop music. But wow, what a road to travel. No lesser men could have made it. For most, it's was a long time till they started making decent bread. But they had to play the blues, and how they played!

From the rice plantations came Sonny Boy Williamson; from the cotton fields came B.B. King. T-Bone Walker worked in medicine shows (as did B.B.) till the great classic blues singers Ida Cox and Ma Rainey caught up with him. Big Mama Thornton was washing floors in a saloon at the age of fourteen when the regular singer quit and she was told to fill in. John Lee Hooker was a movie usher and hospital orderly. Joe Turner was a nightclub bouncer, and Albert King drove a bulldozer. Harmonica Slim worked as valet to blues great Lowell Fulsom while his brother Martin taught him the fine points of the harp. Otis Spann and Willie Dixon both worked as professional boxers. Blues is dues. But, first and foremost, blues is music. What music these greats made once the world let them!

What is, or are, the blues? To describe and dissect them is to debase them. The music can speak for itself with more eloquence than cold type ever could render it. But there is still much to be learned when the bluesmakers themselves talk about their music.

B.B. King: "The blues are almost sacred to some people, but others don't understand, and when I can't make them understand, it makes me feel bad, because they mean so much to me."

Buddy Guy: "I think music puts people together by getting around words. Words can be misinterpreted, but music gets right to the heart of the matter. I don't talk all that well, but people understand my music right away. The blues express the longings and hope of my people, and I think the most important thing I can do is to play and sing them whenever and wherever I can."

Albert King: "The blues is somethin' strictly from the soul, what's inside *you*, and man, you don't have to know nothin' 'bout what you're doing with the chords if it *feels* right."

Memphis Slim (Peter Chatman): "The blues will be around as long as people are around carrying their little bundles of troubles. There would be no jazz without the blues. Charlie Parker played it, he understood it, he felt it. Basie played it too. He too understands and feels it. Oh yeah, as long as man is bugged by something, he'll be singing the blues. And feel just a little bit better."

John Lee Hooker: "The blues is a thing; you have the blues about

Bessie Smith

Big Mama Thornton

something. Maybe you're broke, you're disgusted, you have bills, you're losing your home, your car, your girlfriend. That's the blues. When you got money, you're happy. Lots of clothes, it's no blues. Blues comes out of sadness, trouble, misfortune...when you lose something a home, money, your beautiful car—well, you ain't happy behind it and that's the blues. And, really, what the blues comes from—our folks was in slavery a long time ago—now I don't remember that—but my great-grandparents, it's all they could do on the field or farm is moan. That's the only way they had of expressing themselves; on the fields and farms they'd be working and humming songs."

Big Mama Thornton: "You got to feel the blues to sing them—you've got to have a hurt somewhere inside. With me, life started out with a hurt...People talk about the blues coming back. Why, the blues have never left. The blues will never leave. The blues satisfies the ear. They can hear what you're saying if you sing them fast or slow. In the blues, you get more feeling."

Mance Lipscomb (at 70): "The blues was old when my daddy was a little boy."

The voices of the blues.

Since the era of the classic blues of the twenties, the blues of the great female voices, the more "urban" blues of Bessie Smith and Ida Cox and Victoria Spivey (who lives in Brooklyn and still sings occasionally), all the various strains of the blues have continued to flourish side-by-side as it were, although today it has fallen on Big Mama Thornton to hold up the distaff side almost single-handedly. But since records and radio can supply all the sorts of sounds anyone could want, older and newer forms of the country blues are heard today. Thus, when blues were marrried to gospel to reproduce that startling offspring, R & B, both parents continued to be heard, even though their loud young brawler took over center stage. ("Rock and roll, that's nothing but the blues speeded up," says Big Mama T.) But the blues were big enough always to accomodate all comers who had something to say in their singing and playing. The more urbanized sound of, say, B.B. King is not competiting with the more primitive countrified sound of Muddy Waters; rather, the blues scene is one of co-existence and cooperation, at least among the musicians. Voices like Wynonie Harris, Jimmy Rushing, Jimmy Witherspoon, Joe Williams, Joe Turner, Ivory Joe Hunter, Roosevelt Sykes, Bull Moose Jackson, Charles Brown, Willie Mabon (of the Chicago group) and the extraordinary Lowell Fulsom (after being out of sight since 1954, he popped up with a big chart hit in 1970!) were links from blues to R & B that kept the two forms existing side-by-side. That is to say, although R & B won perhaps the broadest-based audience in popular music, it did not supersede or replace the straight blues form. Like Big Mama says, the blues never left, and what is being talked about as the great blues re-

Taj Mahal

vival of today is merely an acknowledgment of two important facts; first, that these blues are the basis for everything that is significant in popular music today; and, second that nobody in the world can play that music like the people who originated it. How can there be a revival of something that never died? Somehow, people in the mainstream culture in this country have the idea that if they, in their little lives, aren't into something, then that something doesn't exist. White America wasn't listening to blues; therefore, there was no more blues. It died and went away...till this "revival" of theirs. But Memphis Slim wrote "Every Day I Have the Blues," and it was a hit on the charts in 1950, in 1952, and again in 1955, and it's still being recorded today (by T-Bone, for one) and it's as real and alive as it ever was. This "revival" spoken of by the mainstream culture really means a revival of their interest in once-more usable commodity; another chance for whites to turn blues into green (and you can dig the size of the pot of gold at the end of that peculiar rainbow, can't you?). Only this time they're doing something really amazing. It's as if you stole a piece of jewelry and went around bragging to everybody, "Oh, I got this ring at Tiffany's!" only Mr. Tiffany don't know you got it there. These new young blues-users exclaim, "Oh man, B.B. King! Muddy Waters! I am forever in their debt blah blah blah..." So now B.B. gets to play in a lot of nice places where he should have been playing years ago; the funny thing is, he's got second billing, and the blah-blah kid is heading the bill for maybe double B.B.'s bread. But it is no longer considered stealing, and the blues is no longer considered dead. If there ever was such a thing as a revival of the blues, it occurred right after the second world war when jazzmen, led by Charlie Parker, who always played the blues, began listening to it more closely and incorporating the blues even more solidly within their music. This is a classic example of what the best in black music has always done refreshed and revitalized itself by going back to its own roots, drawing on its own strengths in ways that an outsider could never truly comprehend.

They now also consider jazz to be dead; read their reams of articles on the subject. In reality, thanks primarily to leaders like the late John Coltrane, and the brilliant Ornette Coleman, Pharoah Sanders, and Archie Shepp (see discography—"The Music is the Message"), the music has gotten too deep and too black for them to know what to do with it, so they ignore it and say it's dead. If the day should come then they think it's suddenly usable and commercial and they can melt it down to Muzak or *if they can learn how to play it*, look for announcements of a great jazz "revival" in the Sunday New York Times. I hope this music continues to elude them forever.

In a chapter on the blues you can talk about jazz, you can talk about anything, 'cause, as John Lee Hooker says: "Blues is the root of all music, jazz, ballads, rock and roll, everything comes from blues, just

John Lee Hooker

stepped it up and changed it a little bit but it's all blues, when you get down to where it's at, it all come from the blues." That is the beauty of the blues.

If truth is beauty and beauty truth, as someone once said, then much of the beauty of the blues lies in the words. There is more honest feeling, simply expressed, in the lyric of one good blues than the rest of the industry turns out in a year. In a blues tune, love doesn't rhyme with dove, it rhymes with bed. Real, honest emotions and small, everyday tragedies are in the province of the blues. Man gone, mother died, house burned, job lost, bill due...that's the blues. Not the stuff that dreams are made on, but rather the harshest realities of the day. That's why Memphis Slim could write "Every Day I Have the Blues," because the blues are such an everyday thing. The explicit sexiness of many lyrics is what sent whites rushing to buy what were then called "race records" back in the twenties. It wasn't race so much as raciness that those buyers were after, and they got it in full measure. The miniscule black middle class of that time was as fully aghast as its puritanical white counterpart at the dirty lyrics and looked down on and disassociated itself from the blues. (Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier pointed out amusedly in his landmark study, "The Black Bourgeoisie", published by the MacMillan Co., New York, that a black "society" woman would pay for front-row seats to hear a European folksinger perform, but wouldn't be caught dead listening to a classic blues singer on stage.) Getting back to the dirty parts, we can still hear such delights as "Mother Fuyer" by (who else?) Dirty Red. ("Urban Blues, Vol. 1," see discography.) Not only were a lot of the lyrics dirty, so were the deals. Joe Turner had rock's first hit, "Shake, Rattle and Roll," but Bill Haley got the cover, the movie, the bread, and the fame. Big Mama Thornton got five hundred dollars for "Hound Dog," a record which sold millions of copies of both her own and Elvis Presley's versions. Sonny Terry (who with the late Little Walter (Jacobs) has brought the art of the blues harmonica to its present eminence) and his partner Brownie McGhee were sharing a New York loft with a bunch of folk singers and getting ten bucks for every groove they cut. They became so indebted to the record company owner they had to cut an album gratis. Blues artists whose records sold in the hundreds of thousands died sick and broke. Others who couldn't earn a decent wage from their talents would drop out of sight, going back to the fields and labors of home. Then, a change in public tastes demanded more blues, and off went the record men, looking for the lost, now-proclaimed geniuses. They found Mississippi John Hurt this way; the name of a little delta town in one of his tunes provided the clue. Son House was "re-re-discovered" in Rochester, New York, working as a short-order cook for Howard Johnson's. Skip James had made it to New York and signed with a record company, but it never brought him enough to live on. By

B.B. King

the fifties, he had given up playing completely. Buddy Guy nearly starved during his first three months in Chicago, and was sleeping in hallways. He had to borrow a dime from a friend in order to call home for money to get him back to Louisiana. Instead, the friend introduced him to *his* friend, Otis Rush, and that turned things around for Buddy. At least one story has a happy ending. Gus Cannon, at 87, still takes day jobs to augment the money he gets from his gigs. And a brilliant guitarist and singer, John Brim, who was an important member of the Chicago blues recording scene, working with Muddy Waters, Little Walter, and Big Maceo Merriweather, hasn't worked as a musician since the early sixties. Of course, during the first onslaught of record men on the cotton fields, a blues singer didn't have to leave home to get cheated. The exploiters set up their equipment and bam! The music was called primitive, but nobody has given a name to the "methods" used to procure it.

Blues people love to hang names on those they love: Bumble Bee Slim, Harmonica Slim, Memphis Slim, Memphis Minnie; Piano Red, Speckled Red, Dirty Red, Tampa Red; Big Maceo, Big Maybelle, Big Walter, Big Mama Thornton; Lightnin' Hopkins and Howlin' Wolf; Muddy Waters and Furry Lewis; Bo Diddley and Mercy Dee; Bukka White, Black Ace and Johnny Ace; Son House and Skip James. That's *names*. (Singer Ivory Joe Hunter though was born well-tagged. That's just how his birth certificate reads!)

Dick Gregory asked the rhetorical question: how could Columbus have "discovered" America when several million Indians were already living here? Yet the descendants of all those European "discoverers" are still playing the same game, and just like Aretha belts out "Re-re-re-re-respect," the blues-users keep on re-re-re-discovering the blues talent. The neglected, rejected, misused, abused, and swindled have their hopes rekindled 'cause the talent ain't dwindled (Skip James, even better on his new recordings than he was at his last discovery), and the cycle starts all over again. But now, new technology has reached even the rural south, and machines have replaced share-croppers and hand-laborers almost everywhere. The landowners brag: "We thought that when we'd lose our niggers, we'd lose everything, but we got more money now than we ever had." So, to what new limbo will the bluesman be assigned when the popular audience finds some new vogue to fasten on to, saying, no doubt, that the "revival" of the blues has run its course?

Or has part of the revolution really hit, the part that the young have demanded, the taste for the honest and the real that outstays fads and fashions? If the kids are true to themselves and their ideals, they should be true to the artists who represent those ideals to them. If it's for real, then the days of exploitation of black art and artists should be drawing to a close. If not, it's back to the small clubs and short bread and unsavory conditions of what Lou Rawls has dubbed the Chitlin Circuit.

But even that is a way of life for the bluesman, and a not unfamiliar one at that. It isn't death, because the blues will never die, no matter who *isn't* listening. So, if you want to be really hip, don't ever say "The blues is back." Just keep remembering, the *blues* is *black*.

One who remembers is Taj Mahal, born not in the delta, but in the bottom lands of Manhattan. Obviously though, his roots stretch southerly because in this time of choices, he has elected to sing country blues. The overalls fit this big black hulk of a man, just as he fits the blues. A remarkable voice, he is the only younger man so far to make his mark in this field. In addition to growing up in a blues tradition, he has made a real working study of the past masters. The older country bluesman fear theirs is a dying art, but the strong voice of Taj Mahal says "no." That he can share the bill at the Fillmore East with B.B. and bring the house down is proof enough. He has power, conviction, and a brilliant future. (He's gigging pretty good in the present, too.) All the aches of growing up in the ghetto are but a long dreary bus ride from those of the fields, and the dues are just as heavy. Thus the blues continue, living a life of their own, illuminating the lives of all of us. . .if only we take the time to listen. And listen we must; if we are to learn anything; and learn we must, if we are to live. Thus the blues.

I, Too, Hear America Singing

I, too, hear America singing
But from where I stand
I can only hear Little Richard
And Fats Domino
But sometimes,
I hear Ray Charles
Drowning in his own tears
or Bird
Relaxin at Camarillo
or Horace Silver, Doodling
Then, I don't mind standing a little longer.

Julian Bond

And All That Jazz

Jazz, that sublime mixture of African and European music, is the greatest art that is native to America. To confine it to a chapter in a book would be a destructive and sacrilegious act. Rather than commit such and outrageous act, let's limit ourselves to examining just those jazzmen whose work has hit the mainstream of R & B and whose records have made the charts. In addition to winning a wider audience for the jazz leaders who are heard on them, these records have served to greatly influence and enrich the entire popular music scene. Because of the successes of these largely instrumental pieces, pop musicians have learned to improvise their music in the way of the jazz masters and have learned to incorporate jazz rhythms and forms into their music.

Mongo Santamaria

Not every top jazzman is a genius, but many have come close to that classification. A study in depth would show that jazz has influenced musicians who may be completely unaware of the fact. This most assuredly is not that study, but one example is irresistable: no one is playing the saxaphone today the way it was played *before* Charlie Parker. Bird Lives every time an alto man picks up his horn. Right on.

Jazz jammed the R & B charts when, in 1965, a Chicago piano player named Ramsey Lewis did a tickling kind of instrumental version of a popular turn called "The In Crowd." That it was jazz didn't seem to matter; all that was important at that point in history (and at this point, too!) was that the kids could dance to it. And dance to it they did, to all the millions of copies of it that Ramsey Lewis' happy label pressed and sold. The Ramsey Lewis Trio had recorded twenty-six albums, but it was their rendition of an R & B hit that brought them into the mainstream. When they followed up with "Hang On Sloopy," "Wade in the Water," and seven gold records, the music industry sat up and said, "Hello, jazz!" Ever searching for the new "thing," the next trend, people began to talk about how jazz and rock would fuse. Jazz would enrich rock, and the combination would enrich the record producers. New groups formed around the idea, and existing groups thought of revitalizing themselves with a hypo of instant jazz by hiring a few horns. Naturally, this new nonsense never jelled, and when jazz did hit on the R & B and pop charts, it was the work of recognized and respected masters whose sound had found new audiences. For the most part though, jazz has continued to be left sitting in the waiting room while the more immediately commercial music garnered all the attention, promotion, and money. Just how chancy things are for the jazz artist is exquisitely illustrated by the Ramsey Lewis saga.

After forming, Ramsey and his trio got a fairly steady gig in his hometown, Chicago. There, they attracted a growing number of fans, one of whom suggested that the group get into recording, and even arranged an audition for them with the head of a record company, Chess. Now, Phil Chess was a very astute man about music. He had recorded, and his company still does, some of the greatest R & B and blues talent in the world. People like Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, Howlin' Wolf, Chuck Berry, and others whose names appear everywhere in this book. But Mr. Chess didn't know jazz. When the trio showed up, he had a stockboy named Sonny sit in to evaluate the group. Sonny (wish I knew his last name, but I don't) said yes, and the group was signed. What if Sonny had had a cold that day? What if his mother was sick? What if he didn't have a good pair of ears? Remember, out of this has come seven gold records so far, and more that we'll get to soon. This story had a happy ending, but the state of jazz is precarious, to say the least. Please, stockboys of the world, unite: maybe we'll get some more jazz.

Nobody who knows jazz has to be told who Cannonball Adderley is. Since 1955, he has been a major force on both the alto and soprano saxes. He is purely a jazz musician who cherishes all black music. He comes from a musical family. Both he and his brother Nat, a fine trumpet player, followed the wishes of their father who had to give up playing and turn to teaching in order to support his family. The senior Adderley, who used to play cornet (which Nat still does), was a proud papa when he was present at a recent recording session. After a particularly fine solo, he commended Nat with the comment, "You sound almost as good as I used to." When his older son played "I Remember Bird" (a tribute to Cannonball's great inspiration, Charlie Parker), Mr. Adderley stated firmly, "I remember *me*!"

Bird is quoted by Nat Hentoff, the jazz critic, as saying, "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn." Cannonball Adderley is marvelous proof of that wisdom. He is happy in his work, and his work shows it. When he hit the charts with "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," it was a total jazz triumph. His happy sound struck home to millions of people, and it wasn't a re-do of a pop R & B hit that grooved them; it was an original jazz composition — bluesy, churchy, dancey, and swinging. It was written by Cannonball's piano player, Joe Zawinul, surely the most soulful Austrian ever, and one of the very few who "pass" when the really rigid purists draw a color line around their definition of soul. But then, he is, as we say, "living the life"; as a member of a black group, he shares all the problems that come to it, and has completely immersed himself in the traditions of black music. He is no mere imitator, as so many Europeans are; he is an extremely gifted innovator, and his playing as well as his writing defy the most color-conscious ears. Even though bookings for the group are usually the best in places like New York's stunning spot Plaza 9-And All That Jazz, life is still less than easy for the black artist, and Zawinul is a dues-paying member of that persecuted group. That he is a brother by choice, not birth, in no way invalidates that membership, nor his contributions to it. Joe Zawinul is good people; he and the group hit again with his "Country Preacher," a tribute to Chicago's dynamic Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Another nonAmerican has made some jazzy splashes on the restless, shifting sands (remember that one?) of R & B, but he springs straight from the very soil that gives root to the music itself. Hugh Masekela, a very gifted young trumpet player, left his native South Africa as an accompanist to Miriam Makeba who was then his wife. There was so much ebullience and life in his music that he and his group soon became a separate attraction on the international circuit. Masekela was deep into jazz, doing new versions of African songs, sensuous Afro-Cuban interpretations of pop tunes, and some originals by himself and other mem-

bers of his group. It was a mixed bag, but a good one, held together by the driving force of the Masekela horn work. He was getting a rep and a following and making appearances at the top jazz spots on both coasts, and his club and concert work drew good crowds. He was selling a respectable number of records, too. Then, bam! Or, "Up, Up, and Away," to be more precise. His instrumental version of the Fifth Dimension's fantastic hit immediately established him as a pop star. Once more, jazz flavor was sweetening the charts, and the flashing smile and bright brassworks of the young African was adding up to Top Ten gold. He followed up with another groovy groove, "Grazing in the Grass," just to let us all know that he wasn't just a one-hit happening. His is a constantly developing, experimenting, innovating sound; one that promises much for the future as he compounds African and American music to work more of his unique magic.

The ships that brought blacks to this continent in chains didn't head straight for Old Virginny, and if we are apt to forget this fact, there is something in the music to remind us, as there is always something of every black experience reflected in the literature of soul music. The various islands of the Caribbean Sea were used as places of imprisonment for the captured bodies that had proved strong enough to survive the deadly Middle Passage of the slave trade. (As many as two-thirds perished in those stinking holds, but so lucrative was the business, it was counted no loss.) The British used Jamaica, French Haiti, Spanish Cuba, and so on, as breaking-in centers for the slaves who would then be shipped to the American south. A small percentage were retained for the plantations and other enterprises of the islands themselves, and these slaves, less systematically separated from their fellow tribesmen than those bound for America, managed to save more of their African culture. Thus, the islands, especially Cuba, developed their own music; linked to, yet separate from that of the black people of the United States, and in some ways even closer to that of the mother continent. Also, Cuban music absorbed much from the music of Spain. The resulting blend, usually designated Afro-Cuban, has been an exciting influence in many areas of popular music, particularly in jazz. Black jazz artists, going back to Dizzy Gillespie, have recognized the power of Cuban drumming, which, in some cases, has survived intact from its African origins. Actually, until the advent of the twist and all its discotheque-type offshoots, all of which are based primarily on and originated with soul music, the most popular dances were Cuban (tango, conga, rhumba, cha cha, etc.) or Brazilian (the samba); these, in turn, were, in great part, derived from African music. It is not surprising then, that Cuban-influenced jazz has so often been incorporated into the mainstream of American music. Happily, the foremost practitioner of this sound today is one of the greatest legatees of this exciting music, Mongo Santamaria. Today,

Mongo is playing primarily Afro-Cuban instrumentations of R & B and other pop hits, but he first fired the general listening public with his version of "Watermelon Man."

This now-standard composition is the creation of a foremost jazzman, Herbie Hancock, a pre-eminent pianist and writer who comes from Chicago, not Cuba. But in the hands of the Cuban Mongo, the tune transcended limitations of time, place or style; its rhythmic melody was a cornucopia of jazz, blues, Latin rhythmns, and street cries. Since then, Mongo (the name is a nickname for Ramon) has turned up and churned up the charts with his versions of "Workin' on a Groovy Thing," and "Stoned Soul Picnic." These Afro-Cuban jazz offerings may be the closest thing in commercial music today to the African original. At any rate, there is a fervor and an excitement created by Mongo's music that fairly leaps off the record and catches the listener in a wild storm of sound that is irresistable. This Cuban-soul-jazz is possibly the most infectious music being played today. It is jazz, but jazz with the rich and ornate embroidery of the tropics.

While the rock rush to jazz that was prophesied with the advent of Ramsey Lewis did not quite coalesce as expected by the music-money experts, the jazzmen are still making and shaking the charts with increasing regularity. Is it because rock is jazzing more, or jazz is rocking more that jazz is once more turning people on? It's difficult to make an arbitrary distinction because as often as a jazz composition hits, so does a jazz version of an R & B hit. Then too, jazz and rock have so many things in common, including an overlapping audience, and all the music that soul people make in R & B and jazz has the same mother, the blues. When the highly trained jazz musician takes his talent and knowledge down to where the people are and he makes it swing, he connects. Sonny the stockboy knew that, and if you want to know just how right he was, dig this.

Probably the biggest instrumental jazz record to score on the R & B charts since the first Ramsey Lewis disc was "Soulful Strut," by the Young-Holt Unlimited. So who, you may well ask, is Young? And who is Holt? Why, they're none other than the other two-thirds of that original Ramsey Lewis Trio. After the initial successes of that group, Eldee Young and Isaac "Red" Holt came to New York to do their own thing; once again, after some degree of recognition had been won among the jazz fans, the co-leaders of the new group gave the people some sweet soulful dancing sound, and "Soulful Strut"-ted all the way to Carnegie Hall. They did a beautiful thing with "Little Green Apples." They now have increased the original size of the trio (hence the Unlimited), and have carved out a nice niche for themselves with their pretty sound.

Perhaps because jazz has developed into an abstract art, both artists and audience frequently forget that jazz was originally a marching and a

dancing music. When jazz was still struggling for appreciation and acceptance, march master John Phillip Sousa quipped, "Jazz will survive as long as people listen to music with their feet." Well, someone else once remarked, "There's many a truth oftimes said in jest," and Sousa's line may be a classic example. Why shouldn't music appeal to the body as readily as to the mind? Jazz and R & B can be very sexy. There is nothing to be ashamed of in that, although enjoying oneself goes against the American puritan ethic; hypocrisy seems to be preferred to honesty.

This very hypocrisy is devastatingly dealt with in "Compared to What," a tune that pianist Les McCann originally recorded several years ago. When he teamed up with saxophonist Eddie Harris, they played it at a jazz festival in Montreux, Switzerland. Their whole exhilarating performance was recorded, and "Compared To What" showed up as one of the tracks. The album jumped on the jazz charts; the cut was in the Top Ten R & B within a month. Since its message was so out spoken, it was astonishing that it got any airplay. But people heard it, loved it, demanded it and, happy to report, got it. The lyric is a damning indictment of many of the prevalent attitudes of this society, and packs a wallop of wisdom in the framework of a single song that could fill volumes. People heard truth, and they dug it. Maybe the kids even danced to it, but they got the message. They couldn't help but get it. (Keyboard king McCann is another one of those instrumentalists who "sing out." You can't try not to listen. As a vocalist, he roughly compares with, say, Dizzy Gillespie.)

Having a pop hit is no new thing to Eddie Harris. His own tune, "Listen Here," was a smash on all the charts; it also irrevocably demonstrated that electrically amplified horns can be a worthwhile addition to the vocabulary of instrumentation, not merely a new gimmick for trick effects. Harris is one of the most popular jazz saxophonists recording today, and his teaming with Les McCann was a stroke of genius. Together the two should be providing us with much excitement.

Another jazzman with a penchant for breaking out in pop is Brother Jack McDuff. His blues-gospel organ music is deeply steeped in both those powerful traditions. Although the title, "Electric Surfboard" sounds more than a bit removed from both of those influences, it was pure McDuff stuff. It just goes to show ya that Brother J. is always right there where its happening, and up to the minute in his thinking as well as his playing; this is attested to by two of his earlier popular sides --"Let My People Go" and "Black Is." He has been playing the blues for a long time; before forming his own group he was featured with the great Willis "Gator Tail" Jackson's band. It's always fulfilling to see someone who's been into it before blues became "the thing" getting his share of recognition rewards. Everybody's talking blues now, but time was that playing it and living it were synonymous. Go, Brother Jack.

Another giant among organists is Richard "Groove" Holmes who worked as a sideman and recorded with some of the greatest names in the history of jazz. Groove was just doing his thing on an LP called "Soul Message"; (that should tell you just what his thing is!). One of the cuts was the lovely ballad "Misty," and the groovy Groove groove went to the Top Ten in the R & B listings. It also went on pop and easy listening, "Misty" radio station playlists and record sales charts. As a prominent jazz critic put it, "If jazz is dead, what's that song I hear?"

The closing of many clubs brought about by the supposed death of jazz, made a fine jazz artist like alto saxist Lou Donaldson put aside his first love and concentrate on R & B engagements. Those club dates were a molding force in his career; more than perhaps any other jazzman, Lou can get with the R & B stuff and come up winners; witness "Mr. Shing-a-ling," "Alligator Bogaloo," and his dynamite doing of the James Brown tune "Say It Loud." The first two titles prove pretty conclusively that Lou is one who has never forgotten that music is for dancing as well as listening. He makes jazz relate to people. His music throws kisses and hugs to the audience and wraps them up completely. He maintains a high level of musicianship that invites you to use your ears as well as your feet. He also has a great sense of humor that makes every set he does, in club and concert appearances, high entertainment.

Actually, the gifts of the jazzman are exactly what is required to sustain both R & B and its love child, rock, as dance music. When people are grooving on the floor, working out, doing their thing, they want more than the three minutes of music that the average hit song is trimmed down to for recording purposes. The jazz musician is able to give them more. More than any other instrumentalist, he is able to improvise on the written score, to shape, and bend, and send the notes flying from the confines of print to a newer, freer, longer life than perhaps even the composer could foresee. The jazz geniuses learned to improvise on the music so they could do their thing, and improvisation has become one of the richest and most rewarding aspects of jazz. John Coltrane took a fairly "blah" and sentimental piece called "My Favorite Things" from the Broadway show "The Sound of Music," and improvising on the melody, turned it into a work of art that runs one second short of *twenty minutes*! The most highly trained classical musicians are astounded by such virtuosity; all their schooling hasn't equipped them to do what any jazzman worth his horn considers child's play. (Charlie Parker would suddenly start improvising on a different beat than the one being played; when he finished his solo, he would be exactly where the others were, where he would have been if he had never taken the solo at all.

Without resorting to artistic pretentiousness (which is alien to good jazz and R & B anyway), though frequently rampant in rock, the mu-

sician who can improvise can add a great deal to the enjoyment of an audience, especially a dancing audience. Perhaps this is one of the ways in which jazz will influence R & B. And in return for the help and advice, maybe the R & Bers will make a little room in their hip, warm, house for the jazz and the jazzmen who have been standing out in the cold for so long.

There is another small matter of indebtedness that most soul fans are probably not even aware of. The very expression Soul Music was first used to describe the work of Horace Silver, who was instilling in his jazz a churchy, return to the roots kind of feeling, a feeling he felt was closer to the black experience than the cool, post-bop, late fifties experiments of the jazzmen. Music then, not for the feet or the head particularly, but for the soul, the immortal, immemorial soul. Soul music. Music for, in Du Bois' phrase, the "souls of the black folk."

The Bishop Of Atlanta: Ray Charles

The Bishop seduces the world with his voice
Sweat strangles mute eyes
As insinuations gush out through a hydrant of sorrow
Dreams, a world never seen
Moulded on Africa's anvil, tempered down home
Documented in cries and wails
Screaming to be ignored, crooning to be heard
Throbbing from the gutter
On Saturday night
Silver offering only
The Right Reverend's back in town
Don't it make you feel all right?

Julian Bond

Ray Charles—That's All!

They say that soul can not be defined, no combination of words is sufficiently precise, no shade of meaning both subtle and articulate enough to get close to the experience itself. Rather than try to disprove the anti-definitionists, let us turn instead to the embodiment of soul, to its ultimate practitioner, its peerless exponent, Ray Charles. It is doubtful that even the most exacting purist would argue the choice. If soul *had* to be narrowed down to a definition, exactly pinpointed, boiled down to an immutable law, then the name Ray Charles would be it.

If Soul music is blues, gospel, and jazz, as well as R & B, Ray Charles alone sings in all those voices. If this music is (and yes, it sure-

ly is) the distillation of the black experience in America, this man bears burdens of a people on his shoulders. And if soul also represents the ultimate and ringing triumph over suffering and adversity, then he epitomizes it. Again, if soul ain't nuthin' but the greatest, swingingest, dancingest, singingest, hand-clappingest, foot-tappingest, fingerpoppingest sound on earth then, Ray Charles is that too.

Chronologically he is forty years old, but spiritually he is more like four hundred; there is no aspect of black history in this country that has not touched and molded him and his music. His early years contain, in capsule, all the tragedies and deprivations that an oppressed people can suffer. He was born into a poor family in the totally segregated rural south. As if that weren't dues enough, tragedy struck in ruthlessly close succession. When he was four years old, his baby brother drowned before his eyes. When he was six, he was struck totally blind. When he was ten, his father died. At fifteen, his mother died and Ray Charles was left alone in the world.

It is true such tragedies — loss of parents, loss of one's own sight — happen to all sorts of people in all sorts of places and conditions of life, but it is also harshly true that they occur with greater frequency and earlier in life to poor, oppressed, denied people than to the more fortunate ones. It's a truism that it's tougher to be black; that statement has its corollary: you have to be tougher to be black and survive. That a Ray Charles could suffer and not only survive, but triumph will be taken by some to affirm the existence of a Higher Being; by some others to celebrate the human spirit; by still others it will simply be ascribed to "Soul, baby!" They may all be right.

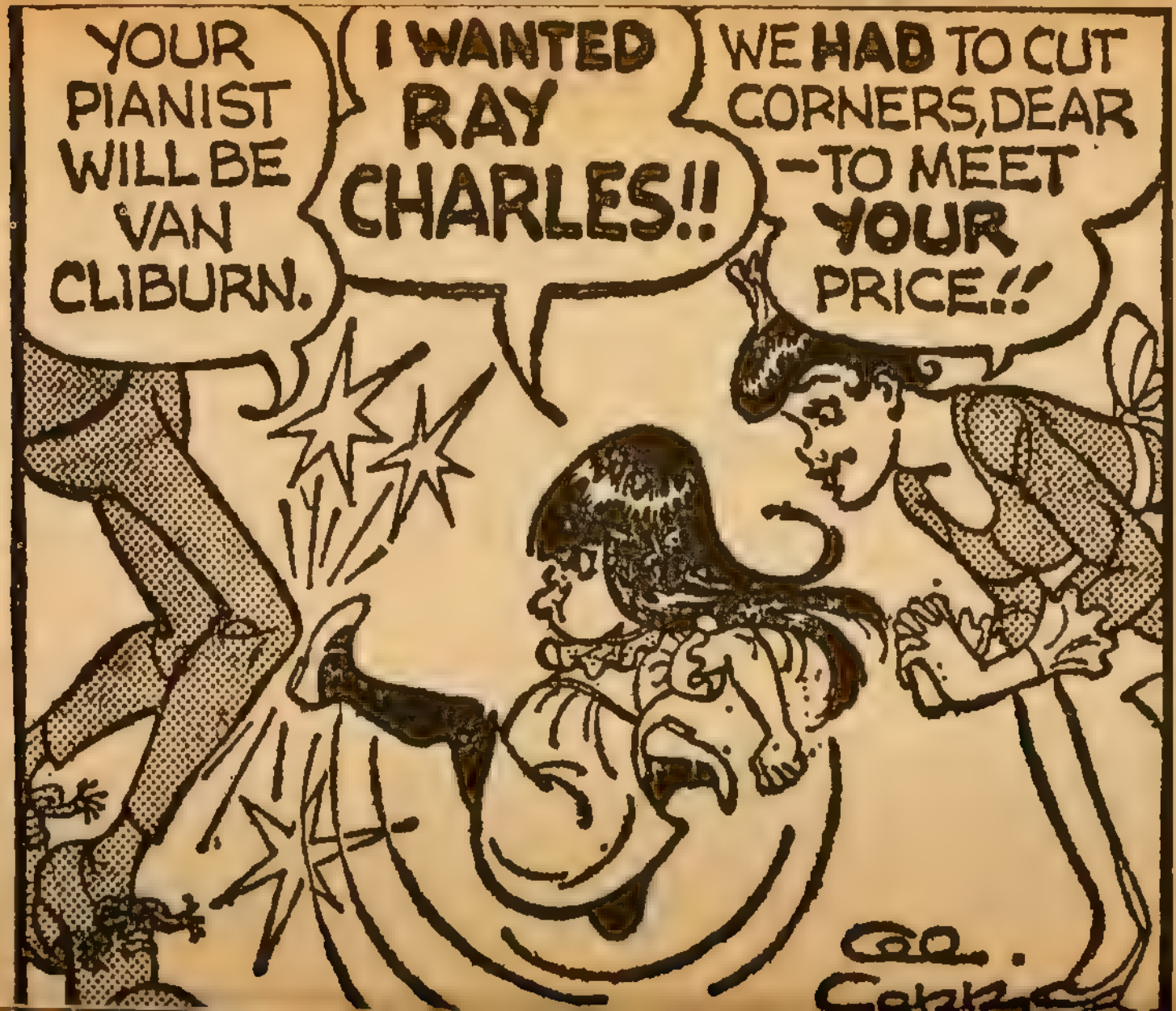
Just as Ray Charles' life became the marrow of his music, so is his music an essential element in all of our lives. It seems as though there's always been a Ray Charles; it comes as something of a surprise to learn that he made his first recordings in 1949 and 1950, and that he only started putting together that infinite book of soul with which the general public associates him in 1955. Simple arithmetic tells us that in fifteen years he has dominated every area of popular music; so much so that we think he has been with us forever. There is a strong element of timelessness in his music that serves to reinforce that feeling. His genius is so universal that he is equally at home with country and western music as with rhythm and blues, and as familiar with British pop material as with gospel and jazz. Ray Charles is the master mixer: no matter what a song looks like on paper, or what the world labels it, when he puts it to wax, it is immediately absorbed into the book of soul. The big-city listeners who put Charles' versions of "I Can't Stop Loving You" and "You Don't Know Me" high on the R & B charts would never have guessed that these tunes were both country standards. Once he recorded them, they became Ray Charles standards, so who cares where they

Ray Charles

came from. To many soul-oriented fans—whose interest in white pop music is only marginal at best and more often non-existent Charles' "Eleanor Rigby" most likely came across as a poor soul sister, alone in some desolate and lonely rural southern backwater, with the local church her only solace (this view reinforced by Aretha Franklin's excellent and highly individual treatment of the same song). Most, if not all, of the enormously popular British rock groups openly acknowledge that they built their careers on the musical base of Black America's blues. When one of their idols, like Ray Charles, records a Beatles tune, they will often term it the "best" version of the song. The British groups on the whole have been much more honest and frank about their use of soul material than the white American performers who grew wealthy off their "cover" versions of black hits. (Interestingly, the British blues groups come closer to the true soul sound than the American imitators.)

Of course, everybody on the music scene gets something from Ray Charles. This is not to say they're all stealing; on the contrary, his influence and artistry are acknowledged by many, and it would be almost impossible to be on the music scene and not have something of Ray Charles rub off on you. That's part of his genius, this incredible impact on anyone who has ears. Jazzmen, surely the most discriminating of music makers, welcome him as one of their own. In fact, during the fifties, when he was recording for Atlantic, his singles were hitting on the pop and R & B charts, and his albums were doing the same thing, but on the jazz charts! As a jazz musician, he was noted as an organist and pianist, as well as vocalist. Here too, he was a strikingly original innovator and influence; many of the members of the band he put together for those recording sessions and appearances (e.g., David "Fathead" Newman) have gone on to make names for themselves as fine jazz artists. Many of the arrangers he uses Quincy Jones, Hank Crawford, Gerald Wilson—are jazzmen. All of these men record, arrange for other composers, and are themselves major writers in jazz and jazz-oriented music. They are important factors in spreading the Charles influence. His constant influence goes on and on, and this is just a part of the picture, and just in the jazz area at that. However, it will have to serve as example, because to try and trace a similar pattern of influence in, say, pop music would be almost impossible. His influence there is simply too widespread. Suffice it to say that it was Frank Sinatra who labeled Ray Charles "The Genius," adding that in his opinion, he is the only genius in music today.

While we're on the subject of influencing factors in music, it should be noted that on the opposite side of the coin, there are no names to cite as those who have influenced Charles himself. There was only one short period during which this wasn't true; his earliest recordings have


YOUR PIANIST WILL BE VAN CLIBURN.
I WANTED RAY CHARLES!!
WE HAD TO CUT CORNERS, DEAR —TO MEET YOUR PRICE!!

a most decidedly Nat King Cole sound; at that early stage in his career this was precisely the sound he sought. He had organized a trio that played around Florida and Georgia for a while, until the urge to get out of the deep south became overpowering. Then the group ended up in Seattle, Washington, as far away as one could get from Florida and still be in the United States. The smooth, Cole-like sound of the trio was good enough to get them a steady spot on a radio program, and then a sponsored television show, the first time any black artists achieved that in the overwhelmingly white Northwest. For Charles, this was a good money gig, but personally unsatisfying. He knew he had to find his own voice, and that's just what he set out to do. Once having found it, he was never again anyone else.

This attitude, this demand he makes of himself to be his own man, dates back to his mother's earliest teaching. He was seven years old when she told him, "You're blind, not stupid. You lost your sight, not your mind." The youngster was placed in a school for the blind in Orlando, Florida. There, his mother's teachings and his love of music combined to form his determination that this handicap was not going to change his life's potential. Ray Charles was going to be all that he could be; blindness and blackness and the rest of the world's bitchiness were not going to be deterents. Instead, his problems were going to serve as springboards to manhood and self-realization. At the age of seven, the institutionalized, poor, black, blind, boy understood this and began working on it. Ray Charles learned everything there was to learn in such circumstances, except self pity. There was no time for it on his schedule; he was too busy with mastering braille, typing, piano, and woodworking. There was no room for self pity in his heart, for that was already full of the music that was to become his life.

The school, St. Augustine's, was home until he was fifteen; most likely, it was the loss of his mother at that time that made him leave. Following her advice, he was going to set out on his own. Imagine the courage of that woman! She had suffered the loss of a four-year old baby and her husband, and had her other son left blind. Except for Ray, she was completely without family when she died. Yet, for all her trials, she was able to imbue her son with all those qualities that took him from troubled childhood to brilliant maturity . . . all alone. *That's* SOUL.

His next two years were spent as side-man for numerous bands in the Georgia-Florida area. This was a hand-to-mouth existence, with both hands and mouth empty much of the time. The gigs were uncertain, the pay was uncertain, and about the only certainty was the toughness of working in the still strictly segregated south. Next stop was Seattle and relative success. But there was still the realization that he had yet to find the real Ray Charles. For about a year he worked with the blues

band of Lowell Fulsom; both Fulsom and Charles did well recording for a label called Swingtime. In 1954, Atlantic bought his contract, Ray Charles formed his own band, and a year later told Atlantic he was ready to record. The first record they released was "I Got a Woman," a cold smash, a turning point. Ray Charles had broken out of the confines of a limited audience. The whole world started to tune in.

True to his roots, as every real artist must be, he declared, "My people made me, and I can always go back to them." He had never forgotten that when he was playing for pennies, it was the hard-earned coin of black people that sustained him. No matter how easily the adulation of the white world came to him, he has never reworked his style or material in order to attract it. He was of, by, and for his people at all times. In 1963, when he had received Grammy awards for four consecutive years, he recorded the plaintive cry of the sharecropper in "Busted," a lament of the perenially poor man who has lost everything but his sense of humor. On the album "Crying Time," he sings, "You're in for a Big Surprise," a song about a shoeshine "boy" talking to his unthinking customer. Even an invitation as universal as "Let's Go Get Stoned" speaks of and to the ghetto voicing the need for the only relief available to people who encounter failure and frustration at every turn. Ray Charles is the black Everyman, and black music is the perfect form of expression for him. No other means would have been more appropriate, or as viable. Soul music has as many facets as a diamond, and rays of Ray shine brilliantly from all of them. Jazz, blues, pop, gospel: the best practitioners of each claim him as their own.

There is a paradox to be considered when we discuss Ray Charles and gospel. There is an undeniable churchy sound to much of his music, as there is throughout R & B. His hard-driving keyboard style, and the familiar call-and-response pattern of many of his best vocal sides, especially with the Raelets, are classic renderings of the gospel-inspired form. Yet, in Ray Charles, we have almost the only black giant in popular music who didn't learn his music in church.

Although deeply religious in his personal life, he was never a member of a choir. In this he differs from Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke, James Brown, Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, and virtually every other top name. It would be wrong to imply that there is no gospel influence at work in his music; it's just that it is something he has absorbed on his own, just as he has absorbed so many other musical currents.

Since 1959, when Charles joined the ABC label, he has concentrated more on the pop-R & B idiom than on jazz. He has also been operating in movies, appearing in a film called "Blues for Lovers," and singing the title song for "In the Heat of the Night." This is a logical step for someone in close quarters with the movie makers. Charles' Los Angeles-based corporate complex is as carefully thought-out and executed as his

best songs. It includes a record company, Tangerine, which has Ray Charles as its exclusive property, publishing and "personal management" divisions, an enormous recording studio, all the details of which were figured out by Charles himself, and other investments and holdings, both in and out of the entertainment business.

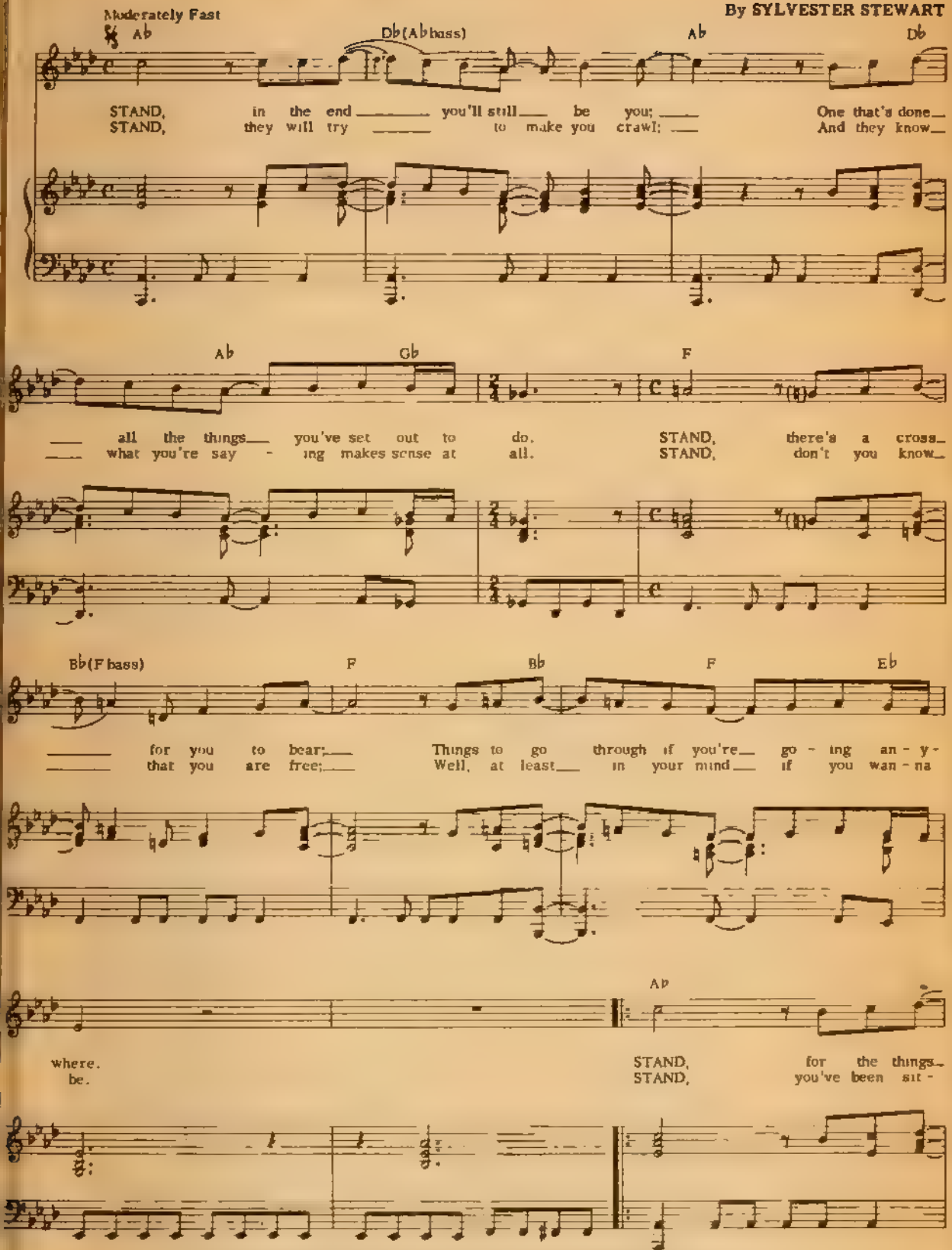
It seems unbelievable that anyone could find the time to run a business, record, tour, do television and movie work, and still write sixty percent of the material he sings, but Ray Charles does it! He is an absolute perfectionist when it comes to his music, and he may spend weeks or months working on a single arrangement. He won't do it unless he is totally convinced that it's as good as it can be. This insistence on perfection down to the minutest detail is a trademark of his. It permeates every aspect of his life, as does his wanting to know how everything he comes in contact with works. This had lead to his being able to repair complicated stereo equipment, television sets, and airplanes. In the recording studio, he can do all his own mixing. He is so proficient at everything he does, that people find it impossible to believe that he really can't see.

There is a great deal of satisfaction in being able to report that after all the tragedies attendant on his youth, Ray Charles has been able to build a happy home life. He and his wife, Della, live in Los Angeles, and there are three young sons—Ray Jr., David, and Robert. He cherishes the privacy of his family and keeps them well out of the public eye. He is proud that he can keep his family in all of the comfort and security that he never knew as a child. For someone who has lost all of his family, it must be the dearest thing in the world to be able to build a family of his own and recreate the warmth and closeness that he knew only so briefly.

So goes Ray Charles, and so goes soul. From hardship and adversity grew the character of the man, grew strong enough to nurture and protect the budding talent. From these two elements came the beauty of the music; the talent deepened into genius, the character stayed too true and strong to be spoiled by success. No physical impediment or material wealth could mar that soul. And that, finally, is what it's all about.

STAND!

By SYLVESTER STEWART


Moderately Fast
Ab
Db(Ab bass)
Ab
Db
STAND, in the end you'll still be you; One that's done
STAND, they will try to make you crawl; And they know
Ab
Gb
F
all the things you've set out to do. STAND, there's a cross
what you're say - ing makes sense at all. STAND, don't you know
Bb(F bass)
F
Bb
F
Eb
for you to bear; Things to go through if you're go - ing an - y -
that you are free; Well, at least in your mind if you wan - na
Ab
where.
be.
STAND, for the things
STAND, you've been sit -

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The Music is The Message

As the condition of the black man in America has always required protest, so has his music mirrored that protest. During slavery, the call to freedom was wrapped in religious guise; the rise of the blues echoed the pangs of new problems. The protest wasn't always pointed, but it was always there. One of the most vivid and pointed of all protest songs came from the deeply emotional, divinely talented, tragic Billie Holiday. The song was written for Billie, and it was called "Strange Fruit." The strange fruit it referred to were the dead bodies of the lynched, and Billie sang it everywhere: in clubs, theaters, wherever she appeared. (Sometimes her audiences were so stoned they didn't know what she was singing; in her autobiography she tells about the woman in a nightclub who asked her to do "that sexy song about the people swinging in the trees".) But to those who listened, and most importantly, to Billie herself, the song was a very strong statement. As one who came up the hardest way possible, all her life Lady Day suffered the inequities heaped upon the outcast. Indeed, it cost her her life. If her other songs reflected her personal blues, "Strange Fruit" was her universal black blues.

In terms of the songs of its day (1939) as well as in terms of what white America was willing to hear black America say, "Strange Fruit"

was far ahead of its time. Probably only Billie Holiday could have gotten away with it. (She had already been so damaged by what she had gone through, there was little else for her to lose.) It wasn't until the emergence of the civil rights movement of the early 1960's that musical protest began to be heard in any great volume. There had been some offhandish kinds of rumbling in some of Chuck Berry's lyrics, especially "School Days," with its complaints against overcrowding, irrelevance of subject matter, and the white image of teacher (who didn't know "how mean she looks"). But this was in a musical context that kids, black and white, could dance and relate to without giving it too much thought.

The protest music of the civil rights movement, on the other hand, quite accurately mirrored that movement, both its strengths and weaknesses. As noted before, most of the "freedom songs" were church songs that usually dated back to slavery days. They were valid enough, but scarcely what you would consider dynamic new forms. And much of the new stuff was being done by folksingers, mostly white, mostly sincere, mostly young. The sight of a girl, on vacation from an exclusive eastern college, perched on a stool in a Greenwich Village coffee house, singing about the "Chain gang-*uh*" (even with the emphasis on the work syllable "uh") is scarcely the sort of thing to bring down the bastions of bigotry.

There were some strong, black voices being raised against injustice, notably Odetta's and Harry Belafonte's, but they too were in the folk bag, a musical expression of limited effect in the black communities. It remained for the time of affirmation, the day of "Black is Beautiful," for a popular music proclaiming that fact to win the hearts and the ears of the people. The new anthem for black people was James Brown's "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud." (By 1969 the Catholics of northern Ireland did their own bloody cover on "We Shall Overcome," which no longer was a contender on the musical or political charts of black people.)

Other singers had been voicing protest and identity before "Say It Loud," but the floodgates of popularity had never before been opened wide enough to admit a broad-based acceptance of commercial importance. For instance, few people ever heard of "Mississippi Goddam," although most of the public was familiar with the name at least, of Nina Simone, its composer and singer. Even those familiar with her work never quite knew how to classify her. Folk singer, jazz singer, blues singer, pop singer? Her range of material and complete command of any musical idiom made it impossible to cubbyhole her. A country that likes all its products, including human beings, neatly packaged and labeled couldn't find a single musical shelf broad enough to contain Nina Simone. She was idolized by a small coterie of knowledgeables, hip to her undeniable talent; her records sold and her appearences were well attended. All along, her mixed bag included songs of more than personal

meaning. She was one of the very few who could do a new reading of "Strange Fruit" and make it happen all over again; make it as devastating in its way as Billie's original had been.

Then, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, and not even trying to hide her bitterness, Nina Simone asked, "Why? (The King of Love is Dead)." That question reverberated throughout the country.

As her public grew, and listened, and learned, Nina Simone became the voice of the black revolution. Nobody else could provide as encompassing a musical backbone. She wrote and sang of "Revolution," where once it had been "Backlash Blues" that occupied her mind; and the "Four Women" who previously had symbolized for her the conditions forced upon black women gave way to the "Young, Gifted, and Black," who had, after all, had the most to learn from Nina Simone. Her person and voice were as black and beautiful as anyone could wish. Her message was as fiery and outspoken as anything that could be heard argued on a ghetto streetcorner. Her artistry was as great as a people drenching themselves in the floodwaters of a found identity could wish one of their own to be. After years of other-imposed twilight, the sun was shining, and Nina Simone was high noon.

Born Eunice Waymon in a little town called Tryon in North Carolina, she became Nina Simone when she took her first job singing in a nightclub. Her parents were church-connected (naturally!), and she didn't want to associate the family name with the booze-blues-dues atmosphere of her new way of livelihood. That wasn't the only change that occured the eventful evening she reported to work at an Atlantic City nightspot; the manager informed her that she was expected to sing, and all of her training had been as a pianist. Once again, we owe three hosannas and a hallellujah to the splendors of that old-time religion and the choirs it trained. Nina, née Eunice, didn't have just another job. The conservatory-trained piano teacher had a whole new career. And the world was soon to have a major new artist to touch first its heart, then its mind and, ultimately, its soul. For Nina has been aptly titled the "High Priestess of Soul," and her music transcends any barriers or limitations that other artists or the public may place on this art. Her voice soars as her spirit soars, and her ideal of soul is as pure and strong as any. She is a culmination of all black music, and possesses a good deal of black magic as well; (anyone who has seen her spellbinding performance can attest to this). But magic comes naturally to a high priestess-conjurer anyway, and Nina Simone is all of that and more. She carries her celebration as a right and a challenge, and she ain't about to lay that burden down. No other artist comes to mind from whom we can expect more exciting and important work in years to come.

We have already talked about James Brown, our Soul Brother Number One and the validity of that designation for him; however, it's im-

possible to discuss R & B with social content without mentioning the enormous part he has played in tuning in great masses of listeners to songs that have something to say. If he hadn't proven that such material could and would sell, the "money changers" of the music business would not have let other artists record significant songs The recording industry depends on mimicry for much of its success; the ability to spot a trend and latch onto it quickly counts much more by far than, say, the ability to read music or recognize talent. (These assets are at most "sometime" things.) If J. B. hadn't told (and sold!) the kids "Don't Be a Drop Out," they never would have let Sly Stone tell them simply to "Stand."

But tell them he did, and in this and other songs lies the heart of what may well be the most dynamic group in popular music today, Sly and the Family Stone. No one can touch them, but they have touched not only the young audience in this country, but other performers as well. The organization and instrumentation of the seven-member Family is as original and complex as is it sound. Members cross all lines of color and gender: Cynthia Robinson plays trumpet, Freddie Stone is lead guitar, Larry Graham is on bass, Jerry Martini is saxophonist, Gregg Errico is drummer, Rosie Stone, in a blond Shirley Temple wig, plays electric piano, and Sly's orgiastic organing charges the whole congregation. Lyrically as well as musically, it is the most sophisticated sound being pounded out by any group today. What makes it all so wonderful is that, in all its sweet complexity, it is grasped and appreciated by an audience of, in Sly's own words, "everyday people." The group doesn't cater to the jaded tastes that require sophistication for their entertainment. The art of the Stone is as broad as it is deep. "Stand" implored its listeners to do just that—"Stand/You've been sitting much too long/There's a permanent crease in your right and wrong/Stand/There's a midget standing tall/And the giant beside him about to fall." (These last two lines are reminiscent of the biblical "The first shall be last and the last shall be first" so dear to the hearts of slave preachers and civil rights leaders.) "Stand," Sly insists, "They will try to make you crawl"; in so insisting, he sold well over a million records; a million everyday-people bought that tune. That so strong a fusion of music and message as the Stone belt out is so damned attractive to so many people is enough to make you start believing in something again.

That Sly Stone believes in something is obvious from talking to him. The something is dual: people and music. What Sly wants to achieve, and has achieved, is peoples' music. He explains it this way: "I want everybody to understand my songs. I want even dummies to understand so they won't be dumb anymore. And you got to talk to them in a way that they can understand. And those people that get bugged by being talked to loud, then you've got to talk soft; if you can still tell the truth and talk soft."

He has always been involved with music; his churchy beginnings go back to age four. While still in his teens, he was a top-rate disc jockey in his native San Francisco. He was already producing and writing (remember Bobby Freeman and "The Swim"?), and more than anything else, wanted to form his own group, a group that would be able to give full expression to the songs and sounds that Sly Stone was already hearing in his head. (A member of the group says that Sly always has at least fifty tunes in his wig that nobody else has heard. That's why they never run out of material.) Sly put a group together, but they weren't marching to his drummer and he disbanded that first band; his second attempt resulted in the Stone exactly as it stands today. At that time, 1966, Sly was twenty-two.

It has been a steady climb since then. The only time the group was inactive was when Cynthia Robinson was seriously ill and Sly cancelled all engagements. One of his firmest rules is that when the sign says Sly and the Family Stone, that's exactly who you're going to see. Sly accepts no substitutes, and he doesn't expect his audience to either. This is one group that has integrity, not just integration. Too, their sound is so tight, so stringently worked out, so unified, there is no way to shuffle pieces and still achieve exactly what the perfectionist Sly demands. He feels that there has been an evolution of his music and of his group; they aren't just a bunch of musicians out there gigging. Each set they play is a statement and a declaration.

He started with music for the body to groove to; (the swim was a big dance craze, "Dance to the Music" a big Sly hit). This in turn led to music to turn minds on ("Life," with its admonition, "You don't have to die before you live," "Don't Call Me Nigger, Whitey," and "Jane is a Groupee," with its cutting indictment of a segment of the audience). The messages were strong, but simply stated, and wedded to irresistable music. Depending on the type of hall, the music could mesmerize the audience, set it dancing (or at least swaying, given the packed conditions of a sell-out concert). Sly is concerned with personal freedom, as in "You Can Make it if You Try." "Stand" is a call with broad social implications. He has run the gamut of subject matter from the personal to the cosmic; his keen ability to see the smaller concern within the context of the larger and illuminate both without ever talking down to his audience is his greatest gift. Couple this with his fantastic musicality, and his complete grasp of the dynamics of performing, and the $250,000 worth of electrical equipment he has towering onstage seems superfluous. But as Sly himself said, can you still talk soft when you're telling the truth. If he feels that all that hardware is necessary, then so be it. (It forms the damnedest background for this free-free-free group. There they are, dressed in the most extraordinary clothes, beaded, feathered, fringed, furred to a fare-thee-well, and there, lurking behind them are

Nina Simone

absolute mountains of grey steel that look like King Kong's file cabinets. Cold, mechanical, IBM-looking things that are inhuman, and would seem to negate the life and life-style that Sly sings of and seems to embody. Well, if that's what he needs to get the music out, it must be okay; but maybe the girls could hang flowers or drape chiffon or do *something* to the machinery to get that death-pallor, insurance company look off the stage.) That's really the only nit I have to pick with this group; its fantastically talented leader is certainly going to keep it at the forefront of everything that is musically important for years to come.

Sly's influence is not confined to the Family Stone. He has strengthened the commitment of other musicians; given them confidence to say and sing what was really on their minds. My soul stirrer has taught me that you can take the boy out of the ghetto, but you can't take the ghetto out of the boy. Indeed, it is one of the great strengths of R & B that it has always stayed as attuned to the people as the people are tuned to it. No matter how successful and rich a singer becomes, he cannot forget his roots. No matter how green the money, the skin stays black. Or as James Brown put it on one occasion, "Money Won't Change You But Time Will Find You Out." (How does he know *everything*?) Thus, singers who had stayed on a safe, comfortable, "I-want-my-baby-back" niche strayed to thoughts of where the problems were really at. The Temptations could leave that smooth "middle-of-the-road" Motown route, take off on "Cloud Nine," that junkie's dream, and without ever mentioning "drugs" in the lyric, touch every nerve in the ghetto. They could then follow with "Message From a Black Man," "Slave," and others.

A careful examination of the repetoire of the most respected and important names in R & B will show that awareness of the problems afflicting the people was always there, and found its way into musical expression; before, however, this expression was not always as explicit as a Sly Stone song.

Ray Charles did it, when he sang the sharecropper's lament, "Busted," which depicted the travails of those who work so hard for so little. Aretha Franklin did it, when she wrote one of the best double-meaning songs of all times, "Think." Taken on one level of meaning, it can be just another lover's lament, with a very powerful beat. But a closer listening to Aretha's inspired interpretation reveals that she is addressing herself to anyone who has been putting her down, since she was, according to the lyric, about ten years old. This was probably the age Aretha awakened to the fact that she was "different" than many of the other kids she knew. A rude awakening it must have been too, considering the cruelty of children. It was strong enough to survive in her memory and appear as a deeply moving song.

Those Motown mainstays, the Supremes, did it with two brilliant

tunes of the Diana Ross era, "Love Child" and "I'm Livin' in Shame." The former was the plea of a girl who was an illegitimate child to her boyfriend to understand why she wouldn't risk raising a child under the same conditions. The second tune is a perfect delineation of a member of the "Black Bourgeoisie," a young girl who goes to college, marries well, and completely turns away from her background and a mother who wore rags and scrubbed floors in order to put her through school. It is so accurate an indictment that a sociologist would need a volume to get across what the composer got across in the 64 bars of an R & B song. It's dangerously close to poetry, an art form that says much in few words. Rock is the living literature of an oppressed people; a poetry with its own music, an art form which must be judged by its own standards.

Classically (European) trained musicians and critics could not understand or evaluate jazz because its source was different from the solely-European based music they knew. A musician who could interpret the profoundest ideas of Bach would be completely helpless in doing the sort of improvisation that any jazzman worthy of the name did. Blue notes sounded flat and foreign to them, and so they scorned the possibility of jazz being art. Yet, those who live outside the experience that produce both R & B and jazz have neither the right nor the way to judge these art forms. The oppressor cannot understand the art of the oppressed; unless he can stop being an oppressor and learn to understand the testimony of those he has been tyrannizing. (The drawings of the concentration camp survivors would have seemed like meaningless scratchings of demented children to their former captors, the "elite" SS guards.) And when a classical performer (like Jose Iturbi) would, in a rare instance, tackle jazz, it sounded like a bad joke

R & B, as an art, has already produced some major and minor masterpieces. What must be remembered is that although its origins can be traced to antiquity (in fact farther in time than the European tradition), its present form has been around for only a few decades. To date it precisely is almost impossible; as any art, it is a constantly growing, developing, changing form. Sometimes long buried, forgotten pieces come forth and seem as fresh and new as the latest flowerings of the branches of the soul tree. (African sculpture was also scorned and forgotten for centuries till Picasso and the post-Impressionist painters "discovered" it and were deeply influenced by it in the early 1900's).

An art object, be it music, painting, or drama, may be so-called primitive in form, and yet be very profound in its interpretation of human emotion, and capable of creating a very immediate reaction on the viewer or listener. The "primitiveness" may enhance the intrinsic value of the object; it may even, when our eyes and ears have become educated, be found to possess a sophistication far beyond our own. It is this

open-mindedness that is essential if we are to enjoy and understand the art or thought of other peoples. (Back to Picasso for a moment: when a viewer announced that he didn't understand the master's paintings, Pablo retorted, "I myself do not understand a single word of Greek. Should I suggest that all the books in Greek be destroyed?" 'nuff said.)

The R & B tradition draws heavily on its African traditions in ways that even its practitioners may not be consciously aware of. African literature, folklore, and mythology were not written art. They were spoken and sung, played and danced. European culture, which leans so heavily on the use of pen and pencil when dealing with everything from art to arithmetic, conquered a continent that knew no books. Close-mouthed, thin-lipped, the Europeans could not evaluate a living tradition that had passed intact from father to son over the centuries. They put the value of a written culture above an oral one; this assured them of their own superiority. With a book in one hand (the Bible, which is not European, but originated in Asia Minor), and a gun in the other (gunpowder also did not come from Europe, but from China), they robbed, divided, enslaved, and killed, all in the name of a man-made, not a God-given, superiority. (That crazy idea has survived to this day.)

Dismissing all prejudiced judgements, it is enough to say that R & B today has not broken with its ancient traditions, even as it has expanded into a form and content that were undreamt of by the ancestors. Continuity on the one hand, and viability on the other, are both necessary requirements of any art. Another necessity of an art form is an audience. The old-timey arguments about art for art's sake are of no interest to anyone anymore; dusty and dated, they serve no purpose here or anywhere else. And no art being practised today is closer or more meaningful to its audience than is R & B.

Books by black writers are not, for the most part, massively read by black people. This is true especially of fiction, where black writers have yet to give us great works that mirror the lives of the people. (After 40 years, Claude McKay's novel, "Home to Harlem" is still the best book on the life in that community.) Black drama, when it is found, is most often to be found along the theater belt traveled mostly by white liberal ticket-buyers; relatively few blacks can afford the prices. Ghetto-based theaters have not had a continuous existence. They too have not mirrored the lives of the "people" to merit broad-based support. The reasons for these and other failures of the "arts" are analyzed in great detail in a book, "The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual," by Harold Cruse, published by William Morrow and Co., New York. Interestingly, in all its massive detail and information, this almost six-hundred page book makes no mention of anyone in R & B, except that the name of Nina Simone appears on a list with no comment of any kind. Perhaps this points up the first fact of the intellectuals' problem: failure to stay close

to the people and *their art*. Only now are black writers beginning to discuss the R & Beautiful people; the only exception has been LeRoi Jones, who has a great affinity for *all* black music and writes about it beautifully and brilliantly. Initially a lover of jazz and historian of blues, he recognizes the value and vitality inherent in R & B that might be beneath the notice of a more narrow-minded critic. No one can fault his ears, or his endeavors as a dramatist bringing theater right into the community. His book, "Blues People" (published by Morrow), is the best and most readable account of the history of black music in America.

Movies and television as media of black art simply do not exist. In movies, there has been one very conspicuous development: Sidney Poitier; damn little else. But a performer, even a good one, doing the work of white writers, directors, producers, cameramen, and owners can scarcely create a black art form. Television's most notable breakthrough to date has been an educational program for preschool children called "Sesame Street." It uses many black talent well; but, this is education, and not art.

What then is it we hear, pouring out of window radios and record shops all over the ghetto? Whose latest performance is being lauded and analyzed on all the street corners, in the bars and barbershops, in the schoolyards and at parties; in short, wherever people gather? It is the art of the singer and the song, who together are telling it like it is; who are commiserating and communicating; celebrating and vindicating the sweet-and-sour mysteries of life. One with their Afro ancestors, the singers tell their tales not in the empty vapidity of lined-up prose, but with much clapping of hands, beating of drums, and moving of feet; testifying as the preachers still do, with the wailing, sighing, shrieking affirmation of the congregation-chorus; invoking in the listener a want to weep, a need to sing, a desire to dance. The artist who works his rootsy, bluesy, mojo magic on the heart of the listener is perhaps the most important artist of all, for he speaks to us and he speaks to today. Not for him the musty museums, a Sunday showcase, or the silence of centuries before he will be heard. He is now.

That nowness is perhaps the greatest strength of this art form. When church and field were the only workshops of song, the gospel grew and the work shout flourished. As black people moved out of the south, the blues went with them. To the promised land came men of musical promise and jazz began. All through the long struggle, there was song to help sustain the spirits of a put-upon people. Dinah Washington cried out against "This Bitter Earth." Sam Cooke knew that "A Change is Gonna Come," and Otis Redding demanded "Respect." These three are gone but their messages are still thrillingly clear. They each had the ability to sing of personal trials, and at the same time, express a universal message that became a haunting search for freedom, understanding, and the

recognition of a hard-won dignity. This quality of the personal-made-universal is another important aspect of art, and one that exists in abundance in R & B.

This is not to say that every song that hits the R & B charts is a real or potential work of art. Far from it. That would be tantamount to saying that great paintings are created every time a brush and oils hit canvas. But R & B is an art form by every criterion supplied by those who measure such things for the benefit of the rest of us. Although we might accept their vocabulary in defining our art, it is the standards of the community from which the music comes that are to be applied in judging the art itself. For far too long, white standards have been used against black art forms; the word "against" is precisely the right one, because the result has too often been total negation of black art. The society whose standards can tolerate the ineptness of a Leslie Uggams on a weekly basis but needs to space out visits by Aretha Franklin to a twice-a-year thing is obviously not one whose judgement can be relied on. Nor have its faculties been sharpened by the hardness of ghetto life to provide a critical ability precise enough to appraise R & B.

As the day of the white hunter in Africa is quickly fading, and white mastery of the continent is shrinking, the white "expert" of black art in America is fast passing away. This "white" expert often has black skin; (see Franz Fanon, "Black Skin, White Masks", Grove Press, New York, N.Y.) In the past, these "expert's" job has been to analyze all things black and explain black people to white people, and to black people themselves. However, a writer like Nat Hentoff will continue to be respected in both communities because he has impeccable credentials, hard won, and he is worth listening to. There aren't many others. The younger black critics and writers who have come along since LeRoi Jones, men like A.B. Spellman, Carman Moore, Charles Wright, and others will help to develop the necessary new critiques, standards, and vocabularies for writing about R & B. There will be mistakes (e.g., the writer who interpreted Martha Reeves and the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Streets" as a call to urban rioting), as with anything new, but at least they will be honest mistakes and not mistakes inspired by the churlish negation or, equally bad, the mindless and patronizing adoration that has been true in the past.

As the audience also grows in education and cultural maturity, it will make more discriminating demands on the music, and art and audience will reinforce each other. The artist who falls behind his audience is always in big trouble, never more so than now with the "Black-is-Beautiful" generation. No amount of hype in the world is going to be able to buy these kids; the artists and their labels had better get hip to that, and quick. These kids have changed and are changing the image of the black man in America. Dig this: the only multiple murder of unknown

innocents by a demented black killer took place not long ago on a Pennsylvania highway. (This sort of crime is not the usual black style.) The assailant turned out to be the son of the old movie stereotype, Stepin Fechit. The new generation simply cannot live with that image, although the forms of disassociation are not always that extreme. But it is a case in point, and a strong enough one to stick in the memory and jab the consciousness. "Is he down?" you'll hear kids asking each other, "is he for real?"

The artists who survive and flourish under the demanding conditions that the new generations will impose will probably fall into four non-rigid and often overlapping types. First, the undeniable talents, those whose gifts are unmistakeable, the Dionne Warwicks, Ray Charleses, Aretha Franklins. Second, those who, with searing truth of vision, testify about the experience of black America; artists like B.B. King, John Lee Hooker, and the great gospel voices. Third, those who have something new to say, and dynamic ways of saying it; Nina Simone, Sly Stone, Taj Mahal. The fourth group will embody artists who are so uniquely representative of the voices and emotions of the community that they will always stand at its heart. Such ones today are James Brown and Tina Turner. The names cited are but a very few who qualify; of course there are many others.

As to the music itself, the trend towards more meaningful songs is undeniable. On a given week in early 1970 (according to *Record World*, January 24, 1970), soul music's top 50 hits included the following which can clearly be classified as music with a message: "Everybody is a Star," "Thank You," by Sly and the Family Stone; "Is it Because I'm Black?" by Syl Johnson; "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black," by Nina Simone; "Message From a Black Man," the Whatnauts; "Compared to What," by Les McCann and Eddie Harris. (This last is a top-notch jazz composition, as are two other chart items, "Electric Surfboard," by Brother Jack MacDuff and "Preacher Man," by Cannonball Adderley.) Then, there are two James Brown tunes back-to-back, and two blues greats, B.B. King and Bobby Bland. There are two entries by the perennial, ultimate soul exponents, Ike and Tina Turner; two supergroups, Supremes and Temptations, with superlative songs. Eight more spots are occupied by some of the top male vocalists in popular music: Wilson Picket, Walter Jackson, Brook Benton, Joe Simon, David Ruffin, Jerry Butler, Johnnie Taylor, and Marvin Gaye. This accounts for almost half of the chart action, and there are also contributions from such outstanding performers as the Miracles, Sweet Inspirations, Mary Wells, the Dells, Jr. Walker, and others.

As an interesting corrollary, it might be noted that of the 50 tunes on the R & B chart, 30 are on the 100-top-hits pop chart for the same week, and together with four other sides that have already moved off

the R & B list, comprise one-third of all the pop tunes. This is a pretty good gauge of the importance of soul music on the entire pop scene.

Should one examine the R & B charts of all of 1960, just ten years earlier, the enormous progress that soul music has made in the past decade is very apparent. Sam Cooke and Dinah Washington were doing "Chain Gang" and "This Bitter Earth," respectively; those were the only two songs that had a serious lyric content. There are no titles that contained the words "black," or "soul," or even "funky." The greatest significance of the R & B hits of 1960 lies in the performers themselves. In addition to those two departed artists mentioned above, some artists who appear in the on the seventies chart, had already established their importance in sixties. For example, Brook Benton, Ike and Tina Turner, Jerry Butler, the Miracles, and B.B. King have never stopped happening. That's a pretty good record of longevity for the area of popular music which is notorious for its one-hit performers and rapid change in taste and fads. The singer, not the song, seems to be the message here.

Besides the songs mentioned, 1960 and 1970 both had excellent entries that were never intended by their creators or performers to do anything other than entertain. In terms of art, it is probably too early to attempt an evaluation of those songs; however, it should be remembered that much of what is considered serious and almost sacred art today was originally meant merely to entertain. (The works of painters like Daumier and Rowlandson were classed as cartoons when they first appeared. The posters of Toulouse-Lautrec weren't even designed to entertain; they just told the public where the entertainment was being held. Have you tried to buy an original Lautrec lately?) We can let the future determine the value of such songs as "The Twist," by Chubby Checker, which highlighted the year of 1960, and "Georgia On My Mind," by Ray Charles, the big hit of that year. It is especially fascinating to conjecture how fate will handle the Genius in years to come. Or vice-versa.

It has been suggested by a critic that the dominance of European music has passed it apex, and that the new influence will come from Africa. This idea was mentioned in connection with "serious" music, not popular music. The international acceptance of R & B was merely mentioned to bolster the idea. But instead of putting down pop music simply because it is pop, the reverse approach should be taken. Soul music is the sound of today; it does reach out and touch more people than any other music being played today. Its use is so widespread as to be all but immeasurable. Television commercials rock along to the strains of R & B to sell us everything. (Schaeffer Beer in New York is especially hip to soul music; they even sponsor contests to discover new talent, which they then hire to get the message across. And it swings!)

The musical comedies of Broadway, which white middlebrow critics like to think is America's main thrust at culture was long immune to

Sly and the Family Stone

soul music. A musical educator produced a complex diagram showing the points of African and European influences on various stages and phases of American music; Broadway was the point furthest of all from Africa on this musical map. This was changed for all time with the production of "Hair." After decades of dominating popular music in America, the musical theater went into a decline as far as its influence on hits is concerned. (Before, the "standards" of the ballad singers and even many of the greatest jazz works came originally from the Broadway scores.) While rock and R & B were on the rise during the fifties, not one Broadway tune became a number one song. Even shows purporting to be as contemporary as "West Side Story" and "Bye Bye Birdie" (with its rock idol hero) didn't make it. But "Hair," with its hippie-type cast, its mixture of black and white youngsters, its parodies of 1950's R & B hits, its take-off on Motown product, its use of current soul stirrings, made it. And made it big. It became a million-seller album, and at least three of its songs have hit the number one spot so far, the best of these hits is the rollicking "Age of Aquarius" as done by the Fifth Dimension. Broadway will never be the same, thank God.

And so the soul goes on and on. Here and abroad, R & B artists and their music play all the best clubs and concert halls. College audiences demand the sound. Television has had to bring black artists into the nation's homes with a now taken-for-granted frequency.

There are no limits to the talents who create soul music. Soul will no doubt go on to conquer whatever portions of the globe it hasn't conquered already. While many classics of this most unclassic art have already been produced, the best is certainly yet to come. And come it will, its blues and gospel and shout reworked to today's themes; its rhythms and beats turning on today's needs; its finger-poppin', foot-stompin', knee-slappin', hand-clappin' sound will go on, and on. And so on and so on and scooby dooby doo-bee.

DISCOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION	
The Bessie Smith Story, Vol. 1-4	Columbia
Leadbelly—The Midnight Special	RCA
Blackbirds of 1928	Columbia
Blues Roots	Poppy
Duke Ellington—My People	Flying Dutchman
Duke Ellington/Mahalia Jackson—Black, Brown, and Beige	Columbia
Spirituals to Swing	Vanguard
The Birth of Soul!	Decca
Josephine Baker	Monmouth-Evergreen
JAMES BROWN—SOUL BROTHER NUMBER ONE	
Live at the Apollo, Vol. 1 & 2	King
Ain't It Funky	King
It's a Mother	King
Soul Brother No. 1	King
James Brown Sings Out of Sight	Smash
Please, Please, Please	King
I Got You	King
Live at the Garden	King
Cold Sweat	King
I Can't Stand Myself	King
Grits and Soul	Smash
Today and Yesterday	Smash
THEY SHALL SING	
Shirley Caesar & Rev. Jeeter—Inspirations	Hob
Shirley Caesar—Stranger On the Road	Hob
Violinaires -God's Creation	Checker
Leon Lumkin & the Gospel Clefs—The Answer	Verve
Best of the Mighty Clouds of Joy	Peacock
Best of the Dixie Hummingbirds	Peacock
Albertina Walker & the Caravans—Think About It	Hob
Swan Silvertones Great Camp Meeting	Hob
Marion Williams—The New Message	Atlantic
Five Blind Boys of Alabama—Too Sweet to be Saved	Hob
We Are in Church Pilgrim Jubilee Singers	Peacock
Harmonizing Four—Where He Leads Me	Hob

Mahalia Jackson A Mighty Fortress	Columbia
Mahalia Jackson's Greatest Hits	Columbia
Mahalia Jackson Right Out of the Church	Columbia
Staples Singers—Amen!	Epic
Staples Singers Will the Circle Be Unbroken	Buddah

ARETHA FRANKLIN—LADY SOUL

Today I Sing the Blues	Columbia
I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You	Atlantic
Aretha Arrives	Atlantic
Lady Soul	Atlantic
Aretha Now	Atlantic
Soul '69	Atlantic
Aretha in Paris	Atlantic
Aretha's Gold	Atlantic
This Girl's in Love With You	Atlantic

THE FORMATIVE FIFTIES

Folk

Harry Belafonte at Carnegie Hall	RCA
Odetta—Live at Carnegie Hall	Vanguard
Josh White—Chain Gang Songs	Elektra
The Magnificent Miriam Makeba	Mercury

Jazz

The Charlie Parker Story, Vol. 1-4	Verve
The Genius of Charlie Parker, Vol. 1-8	Verve
The Charlie Parker Set	Verve
The Definitive Jazz Scene, Vol. 1 & 2	Impulse
Thelonius Monk—The Golden Monk	Prestige
Miles Davis—Walkin'	Prestige
Miles Davis—Miles Ahead	Columbia

R & B

History of Rhythm & Blues, Vol. 1-4	Atlantic
Sing a Song of Soul	Checker
Little Richard	Buddah
Chuck Berry's Golden Decade	Chess
Bo Diddley's 16 All-Time Greatest Hits	Checker
Bo Diddley/Chuck Berry— Two Great Guitars	Checker
Ruth Brown—Black is Brown & Brown is Beautiful	Skye
Fats Domino—Fats is Back	Warner

The Drifters Golden Hits	Atlantic
Little Anthony & The Imperials — Greatest Hits	United Artists
Johnny Otis—Cuttin Up	Epic

THE GOLDEN GROUPS

The Impressions—This is My Country	Curtom
The Impressions Greatest Hits	ABC
Take Some Time Out For the Isley Brothers	Scepter
The Brothers: Isley	T-Neck
The Isley Brothers—It's Your Thing	T-Neck
Ike & Tina Turner—River Deep-Mountain High	A & M
Ike & Tina Turner—The Hunter	Blue Thumb
Ike & Tina Turner—Outta Season	Blue Thumb
Ike & Tina Turner—Live	Liberty
Ike & Tina Turner—Come Together	Liberty
Five Stairsteps & Cubie Family Portrait	Buddah
Peaches & Herb—Greatest Hits	Date
5th Dimension—The Age of Aquarius	Soul City
5th Dimension—Stoned Soul Picnic	Soul City
5th Dimension—Up Up and Away	Soul City
5th Dimension—Portrait	Bell
Friends of Distinction—Highly Distinct	RCA
Friends of Distinction—Grazin'	RCA
Chambers Brothers—Love, Peace and Happiness	Columbia
The Checkmates—Love is All We Have to Give	A & M
Dyke & the Blazers—Dyke's Greatest Hits	Original Sound
Shirelles' Greatest Hits	Scepter
Sweet Inspirations—What the World Needs Now	Atlantic
Delphenics—Super Hits	Philly Groove
Winstons—Color Him Father	Metromedia
Kool & the Gang	DeLite
Meters—Look-Ka Py Py	Josie
Dells—Love is Blue	Cadet
Dells—Oh What a Night	Buddah
Intruders' Greatest Hits	Gamble
Chi-Lites	Brunswick
Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band—In the Jungle, Babe	Warners
Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band—	

Together	Warners
Sam & Dave—I Thank You	Atlantic
Best of Sam & Dave	Atlantic

TALES OF TWO CITIES: MEMPHIS/MOTOWN

Memphis

Booker T. and the M.G.'s Green Onions	Stax
Booker T. and the M.G.'s The Booker T. Set	Stax
Memphis Gold, Vol. I & II	Stax
Otis Redding/Carla Thomas—King and Queen	Stax
Eddie Floyd—Knock on Wood	Stax
Stax-Volt Revue Live in London	Stax
Stax-Volt Revue Live in Paris	Stax
Otis Redding—Live in Europe	Volt
Otis Redding Sings Soul Ballads	Volt
Otis Redding—Dictionary of Soul	Volt
History of Otis Redding	Volt
Soul Explosion	Stax
Steve Cropper/Albert King/Pop Staples Jammed Together	Stax
Johnnie Taylor -Who's Making Love	Stax
Johnnie Taylor Philosophy Continues	Stax
Johnnie Taylor Wanted: One Soul Singer	Stax
Isaac Hayes Hot Buttered Soul	Enterprise
David Porter Gritty, Groovy and Gettin' It	Enterprise
Willie Mitchell—On Top	Hi
Sam & Dave—Hold On, I'm Coming	Stax
Sam & Dave—Double Dynamite	Stax
Sam & Dave—Soul Men	Stax

Motown

Motown Winners' Circle, Vol. 1-4	Motown
16 Original Big Hits, Vol. 1-9	Motown
Diana Ross & the Supremes/Temptations - On Broadway	Motown
The Four Tops Live	Motown
Stevie Wonder—Live	Tamla
Stevie Wonder—My Cherie Amour	Tamla
Stevie Wonder—Greatest Hits	Tamla
The Miracles From the Beginning	Tamla
The Miracles—Greatest Hits Vol. 2	Tamla
Temptations—Cloud Nine	Gordy

Martha Reeves & the Vandellas—Ridin' High	Gordy
Martha Reeves & the Vandellas—Greatest Hits	Gordy
Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell—United	Tamla
Marvin Gaye & Tammi Terrell—You're All I Need	Tamla
Four Tops—Now	Motown
David Ruffin—My Whole World Ended	Motown
Diana Ross Presents the Jackson 5	Motown
Gladys Knight & the Pips Feelin' Bluesy	Soul
Gladys Knight & the Pips—Nitty gritty	Soul
Jr. Walker & the All Stars—What Does It Take to Win Your Love	Soul

DIONNE WARWICK—SWEET SONGBIRD OF SOUL

Presenting Dionne Warwick	Scepter
Anyone Who Had a Heart	Scepter
Make Way for Dionne Warwick	Scepter
Here I Am	Scepter
Here Where There is Love	Scepter
The Sensitive Sound of Dionne Warwick	Scepter
Dionne Warwick in Paris	Scepter
Golden Hits, Part I & II	Scepter
On Stage and in the Movies	Scepter
Windows of the World	Scepter
Valley of the Dolls	Scepter
Promises, Promises	Scepter
Greatest Motion Picture Hits	Scepter
The Magic of Believing	Scepter
Soulful	Scepter

THOSE SWEET SOUL SISTERS

Dinah Washington September in the Rain	Mercury
Dinah Washington—Unforgettable	Mercury
Dinah Washington's Greatest Hits, Vol. 1 & 2	Mercury
Sarah Vaughn's Greatest Hits	Mercury
Ella Fitzgerald—Ella Live	Verve
Ella Fitzgerald—These are the Blues	Verve
Ella Fitzgerald—Ella	Reprise
Nancy Wilson—Can't Take My Eyes Off You	Capitol
Lena Horne—Lena and Gabor	Skye
Lena Horne—Lena-Soul	United Artists

Etta James 'Rocks the House	Chess
Maxine Brown—We'll Cry Together	Commonwealth-United
Maxine Brown/Chuck Jackson—Hold on, We're Coming	Wand
Mary Wells—Greatest Hits	Motown
Mary Wells—Love and Tranquility	Jubilee
Betty Everett/Jerry Butler—Together	Buddah
Betty Everett—There'll Come a Time	Uni
Kim Weston—Big Brass Four Poster	People
Barbara Acklin—Seven Days of Night	Brunswick
Erma Franklin—Soul Sister	Brunswick
Carolyn Franklin—Chain Reaction	RCA
Dee Dee Warwick—Dee Dee's Greatest Hits	Mercury
Tina Britt—Blue All the Way	Minit
Doris Duke—I'm a Loser	Canyon
Bettye Swann—Don't You Ever Get Tired	Capitol
Thelma Houston—Sunshower	Dunhill
Esther Marrow—Newport News, Virginia	Flying Dutchman
Brenda Patterson—Keep On Keepin' On	Epic
Cissy Houston	Commonwealth-United
Barbara Acklin—Someone Else's Arms	Brunswick
Moms Mabley—Abraham, Martin and John	Mercury

THOSE BIG BAD BROTHERS

Wilson Pickett—Right On	Atlantic
Wilson Pickett—Best Of	Atlantic
The Exciting Wilson Pickett	Atlantic
Little Milton—We're Gonna Make It	Checker
Little Milton—Grits Ain't Groceries	Checker
Bobby Bland Spotlighting the Man	Duke
Bobby Bland—Touch of the Blues	Duke
The Best of Joe Tex	Atlantic
Lou Rawls—Live	Capitol
Lou Rawls—Soulin'	Capitol
Lou Rawls—Your Good Thing	Capitol
Jerry Butler—Ice on Ice	Mercury
Jerry Butler—The Soul Goes On	Mercury
Jerry Butler—Golden Hits Live	Mercury
Jackie Wilson—My Golden Favorites, Vol. 1 & 2	Brunswick
R.B. Greaves—Take a Letter, Maria	Atlantic
O.V. Wright—Nucleus of Soul	Backbeat
O.C. Smith—Hickory Holler Revisited	Columbia
O.C. Smith—At Home	Columbia

Joe Simon—Better than Ever	Sound Stage 7
Brook Benton—Golden Hits	Mercury
Brook Benton Today	Cotillion
Two Sides of Gene Chandler	Brunswick
Solomon Burke—Proud Mary	Bell
Eddie Holman—I Love You	ABC
Garland Green—Jealous Kind of Fella	Uni
Davis T. Walker—Going Up	Revue
Sam Cooke—Live at the Copa	RCA
Sam Cooke—Night Beat	RCA
Sam Cooke—The Man Who Invented Soul	RCA
Best of Sam Cooke, Vol. 1 & 2	RCA
Otis Redding—In Person at the Whiskey A Go Go	Atco
Otis Redding—Love Man	Atco
Otis Redding—Pain in My Heart	Atco
Otis Redding—Sitting on the Dock of the Bay	Atco
The Immortal Otis Redding	Atco
Billy Stewart Teaches Old Standards New Tricks	Chess
This is Clarence Carter	Atlantic
The Percy Sledge Way	Atlantic

BLUES ON BLUES

Living Legends	Verve
Memphis Country Blues Festival	Sire
Memphis Swamp Jam	Blue Thumb
This is the Blues, Vol. 2	World Pacific Jazz
Urban Blues, Vol. I	Imperial
Super Blues	Checker
Blues From "Big Bill's" Copa Cabana	Chess
Super Black Blues	BluesTime
Albert Collins—Trash Talkin'	Imperial
Earl Hooker—Don't Have to Worry	BluesWay
John Lee Hooker—And Seven Nights	Verve
John Lee Hooker—Big Band Blues	Buddah
Lightnin' Hopkins—Lightnin'!	Poppy
Lightnin' Hopkins—Lightnin' Strikes	Verve
Ivory Joe Hunter—Ivory Tower	Monument
Elmore James/John Brim—Whose Muddy Shoes	Chess
Albert King—King Does the King's Things	Stax
Albert King/Otis Rush—Door to Door	Chess
B.B. King—The Electrifying B.B. King	BluesWay

B.B. King—Lucille	BluesWay
B.B. King—Live & Well	BluesWay
B.B. King—Completely Well	BluesWay
Sam Lay in Bluesland	Blue Thumb
Taj Mahal	Columbia
Taj Mahal—Natch'l Blues	Columbia
Memphis Slim—Mother Earth	Buddah
The Return of Harmonica Slim	BluesTime
Otis Spann—Cryin' Time	Vanguard
Otis Spann Sweet Giant of the Blues	BluesTime
Sonny Terry/Brownie McGhee Where the Blues Begin	Fontana
Big Mama Thornton Stronger Than Dirt	Mercury
Big Mama Thornton The Way It Is	Mercury
Joe Turner—Big Joe is Here	Atlantic
Joe Turner—The Real Boss of the Blues	BluesTime
Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson—Cherry Red	BluesWay
T-Bone Walker Every Day I Have the Blues	BluesTime
Little Walter Hate to See You Go	Chess
Muddy Waters—Folk Singer	Chess
Muddy Waters—Sail On	Chess
Big Joe Williams—Hand Me Down My Old Walk Stick	World Pacific
Count Basie/Joe Williams—Back to Basie & the Blues	Roulette
Sonny Boy Williamson—Bummer Road	Chess
Howlin' Wolf—Evil	Chess
Willie Dixon—I am The Blues	Columbia

AND ALL THAT JAZZ

Ramsey Lewis—The In Crowd	Cadet
Best of Cannonball Adderley	Capitol
Cannonball Adderley—Country Preacher	
Hugh Masekela—The Promise of a Future	Uni
Mongo Santamaria Soul Bag	Columbia
Mongo Santamaria—Workin' On a Groovy Thing	Columbia
Mongo Santamaria Feelin' Alright	Atlantic
Young-Holt Unlimited Soulful Strut	Brunswick
Les McCann/Eddie Harris—Swiss Movement	Atlantic
Eddie Harris—High Voltage	Atlantic
Brother Jack MacDuff—Electric Surfboard	Blue Note
Richard "Groove" Holmes Soul Message	Prestige

Lou Donaldson—Say It Loud	Blue Note
John Coltrane—Selflessness	Impulse
Best of Horace Silver	Blue Note

RAY CHARLES—THAT'S ALL!

The Ray Charles Story, Volumes 1-4	Atlantic
Listen	ABC
Portrait of Ray	ABC
Crying Time	ABC
Genius Hits the Road	ABC
Greatest Hits	ABC
Ingredients in a Recipe For Soul	ABC
Sweet and Sour Tears	ABC
Have a Smile With Me	ABC
Live in Concert	ABC
Genius Plus Soul Equals Jazz	Impulse
I'm All Yours-Baby!	ABC
Ray's Moods	ABC

THE MUSIC IS THE MESSAGE

Sly & the Family Stone—Life	Epic
Sly & the Family Stone—Stand!	Epic
Sly & the Family Stone Dance to the Music	Epic
Nina Simone—In Concert	Phillips
The Best of Nina Simone	Phillips
Nina Simone—Silk and Soul	RCA
Nina Simone—'Nuff Said!	RCA
Nina Simone—To Love Somebody	RCA
Nina Simone—Black Gold	RCA
Temptations—Puzzle People	Gordy
Diana Ross & the Supremes— Greatest Hits, Vol. 3	Motown
Della Reese—Black is Beautiful	Avco-Embassy
Taj Mahal—Giant Step	Columbia
Impressions—The Best Impressions	Curtom
Leon Bibb—Foment, Ferment, Free . . . Free	RCA
Four Tops—Soul Spin	Motown
James Brown—Say It Loud	King
Ray Charles—A Man and His Soul	ABC
Richie Havens—Mixed Bag	Verve
Richie Havens—Something Else Again	Verve
Richie Havens—Stonehenge	Stormy Forest
The Last Poets	Douglas

!!!BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL IS SOUL!!!

BLACK IS
Ray Charles & Aretha Franklin &
James Brown & Dionne Warwick!

BEAUTIFUL IS
Diana Ross and Wilson Pickett &
Carla Thomas & Stevie Wonder!

SOUL IS
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Family Stone & The Impressions &
Sam & Dave! & hundreds more!

SOUL IS BLACK AND IT'S BEAUTIFUL AND IT'S PROUD!
THIS IS THE STORY OF THE MUSIC
AND THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT BECAUSE
THEY *ARE* SOUL!

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